THE SINOPEDIA SERIES

China's Ethnic Groups and Religions

ZHENG QIAN

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Table of Contents

Preface vii

Chapter 1. Nationality or Ethnic Group? 3

Chapter 2. Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation 13

Chapter 3. An Overview of China's Ethnic Minority Populations 31

Chapter 4. Policies of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in China 49

Chapter 5. Protection and Development of China's Ethnic Minority Culture 69

Chapter 6. Economies of Ethnic Minorities in China 105

Chapter 7. Religious Beliefs of the Chinese People 125

Index 157

Preface

As a journalist who has worked on ethnic minority news reports for over 20 years, I am deeply grateful for the opportunities to cover historical events on ethnic groups and religions in China and to interact with people who promote these events. In this process, I realize, perhaps more deeply than others, that those who really speak about history are the ones who are truly likely to understand its significance. Therefore, I believe it would be helpful to narrate a story here.

In 1950, the victorious troops of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) stopped at the foot of the A-Wa Mountain in Yunnan Province. The troops had received an order from the Southwestern Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to suspend the march until they had determined the situation in the ethnic region and won the support of the ethnic minority people residing there.

A small community comprising the Va minority lived on A-Wa Mountain. La Meng was a remarkable and respected headman who had led his people against both the British troops and the Japanese invaders. He was a man with great self esteem.

La Meng closely observed the PLA who was camped near A-Wa Mountain. He had expected gunshots, but an ethnic minority work team came and invited him to participate in a delegation to watch the National Day Parade in Beijing.

This proud headman told his guests frankly: "We fought the British when they invaded our land. We fought the Japanese when they invaded us. We also fought the Kuomintang. Now, the PLA is here and I am not sure of your intentions yet."

He was not lying. In the past hundred years, wars on A-Wa Mountain had always been caused by outsiders, which included the British, the Japanese, and Kuomintang troops who had looted their mineral resources and occupied their land.

To celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the central government decided to invite representatives from various ethnic groups to watch the parade in Beijing. At that time, the total number of ethnic groups in China was uncertain, but the central government demanded that "every single ethnic group or representative should be invited."

In other parts of China, it was a great honor to receive an invitation to visit Beijing. But on A-Wa Mountain, none of the 18 headmen wanted to go to Beijing.

After much persuasion from the ethnic minority work team, La Meng changed his attitude. He decided to use the traditional Va divination rite of *Dajigua* to make the final decision for this matter. *Dajigua* is a folk practice whereby many small bamboo sticks are dropped inside a tiny hole of a chicken bone, and the different patterns displayed by these sticks would indicate the various omens.

The *Dajigua* always divined bad omens till one day, La Meng received an auspicious sign. From then on, he made up his mind to go to Beijing. But the moment he stepped out of his house, he saw a bird flying in the opposite direction. He stopped immediately and exclaimed: "The bird is conveying the gods' message to us that this journey is extremely ominous and I should not go!"

La Meng then closed his door. However, the ethnic minority work team waited for him patiently bearing in mind the saying, "where there's a will, there's a way." At last, La Meng agreed to go. The sacred wooden drums of the Va minority was beaten as a send-off for La Meng. But what rhythm should these drums play—for a campaign, a warning, or a festival? The rhythm that was played was ambiguous and unclear. This had never happened before. Who could tell whether La Meng should leave?

Initially, La Meng set off on foot, followed by riding a horse. Next, he sat in a truck and finally on a plane. While onboard the plane, he became dizzy and sick. When he finally arrived in Beijing, he thought he had fallen ill. Then, came the invitation from Premier Zhou Enlai for all ethnic minority representatives to have dinner with him!

Immediately, as if energized by a mysterious force, La Meng did not feel ill any more. "I will go, I will go!" he said to himself.

That night, he met Premier Zhou. Premier Zhou paid great respects to every ethnic minority representative present. La Meng had never met a "high-level" official who was so affable and kind.

The National Day Parade started punctually on October 1, 1950. In the ethnic minority delegation watching the parade, 34 were headmen from various ethnic groups in Yunnan Province. What a splendid and exciting scene the parade was! The army marched pass followed by the contingent of sailors. When a loud roar came from the sky, La Meng looked up and saw the fighter jets of the PLA.

He was shocked. This once poor and disunited country was revitalized. He burst into tears. Standing on the platform, La Meng suddenly felt that he also had a stake in this nation.

The day came when ethnic groups met Chairman Mao. After paying their tributes, each ethnic representative went onto the platform and shook hands with Chairman Mao.

"Chairman Mao's hand is so large and firm!" La Meng thought to himself. This handshake left a deep impression in the mind of La Meng.

After bidding Beijing farewell, La Meng visited Shanghai, Wuhan, and Chongqing, along with other members of the ethnic minority delegation, then returned to Yunnan.

However, instead of heading home, La Meng attended a delegation conference of ethnic solidarity held in Pu'er. At the conference, together with another headman Li Bao, they made a joint proposal: in order to achieve lasting solidarity among all ethnic groups, we should always follow the lead of the Communist Party of China. According to the ancient Va minority customs, they would take an oath.

Oath-taking is a folk tradition with a long history. Used as a form of guarantee between any parties involved in a negotiation, oath-taking sets up a system of self-discipline in theism. When facing important events or serious disputes, people tend to build a solid relation of mutual trust by taking oaths before the gods.

All the delegates from the southern Yunnan Province received this proposal warmly and decided that the oath ceremony be held in Pu'er City. The oath ceremony of the Va minority is one in which an ox is slaughtered and sacrificed in a very grand, solemn, and mysterious manner. La Meng was unanimously elected by all the delegates to take on the role of sacrificing the ox.

The oath ceremony was held on December 26, 1950. All the delegates from 26 ethnic communities—including subgroups—from 15 counties of Pu'er gathered at the Red Square.

According to the ancient Va tradition, there is an auspicious omen if the ox collapses to the south after being killed. But if it collapses to the north, it is an undesirable omen indicating failure. In that case, the ceremony should not proceed and all agreements should be canceled.

To the accompaniment of wooden drums, La Meng, although already in his sixties, displayed consummate skills. He stabbed the ox right between the eyes on his first try.

All the people watched as the ox stumbled a few steps, keeping the crowd in suspense. Finally, the ox fell to the south as it was hoped and the crowd burst into thunderous applause.

Afterward, La Meng and other delegates wrote an "oath of solidarity" on a sheet of red paper with everyone signing it. Then a "Monument of Ethnic Solidarity" was set up.

The inscription on the monument is still very clear after more than half a century. It says:

> On behalf of all the ethnic minorities in Pu'er, we, the delegates from 26 ethnic groups, hereby took an oath by stabbing an ox and drinking the sacred water, to unite together under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and will devote ourselves to building a great nation of equality, freedom, and happiness.

Back home, La Meng told his fellow villagers: "Ximeng [a county in Yunnan] is a tiny place compared with the vast lands of China. Only by following the government and the Communist Party of China can we have a bright future."

The story above shows how the new government won the trust of ethnic minorities with her sincerity, respect, and equal treatment 60 years ago, and thus inspired their hope for a bright future after almost a century of colonial invasions, wars, social chaos, and poverty.

In Chinese history, ethnic groups have always taken national unity as the highest political ideal and strongly value its pursuit. The People's Republic of China has reclaimed this historical value and won herself a bright future.

This story can be a starting point for readers to understand the current status of China's ethnic groups and her religions. A more in-depth discussion of this topic awaits you in the main text.

Chapter 1

Nationality or Ethnic Group?

A Historical Deviation

For a country with a 5,000-year-old civilization, the 1848 Opium War can be described as a gigantic axe that brutally split Chinese history and culture. As the waves of Western modernity pounded China from then on, China also wrote her own modern history. Everything in the country began to change at the start of this period.

A major part of modern Chinese history has seen the assimilation of Western culture, either consciously or subconsciously. In the late nineteenth century, the Chinese people hastily accepted a variety of Western concepts, among which was the term "nation" or "nationality." A study of the introduction of this Western terminology allows us to learn how the Chinese combine Western modernity with their own traditions amid misconceptions and deviations.

The word *natio* is of Latin origin, meaning birthplace or biological descent. In the eighteenth century, when the European bourgeoisie began to rise quickly, this emerging class upgraded the ancient Latin word to *nation* with the meaning of "a common language, region, economic life (common tariff), and culture." It was used as a powerful weapon against the feudal system. In 1789, the French missionary Augustine Barlow, first used the word *nationalism* to refer to a social force "that overthrows the feudal monarchial regime." Under the slogan of "One Nation, One State," the emerging bourgeoisie successfully launched a series of social revolutions. When the bourgeois revolutions in Europe ended in 1871, a group of mono-ethnic states had been founded. Hence, the words *nation* and *state* finally merged into a single concept in modern European history.

China has been a unified multi-ethnic country since ancient times, and thus far, 56 ethnic groups have been identified.

When referring to the "nation-state" theory of the modern West, it should be noted that its core concept of *nation* has the meaning of a *state*.

European capitalism subsequently began colonial conquests around the world and thus spread the nation-state theory beyond Europe. However, China had already been a unified multi-ethnic country for 2,000 years when this notion reached her shores. What sort of deviation would occur if the concept of nation and the nation-state theory, born in the modern West, was transplanted into China's historical and cultural background?

In fact, China's bourgeois revolution tried to use Western theories and ideas of nationalism to launch a popular movement for national salvation. But the Chinese bourgeoisie encountered the problem of the *minzu* (literally ethnic group).

The main enemy of the bourgeois revolution in modern China was the government under the rule of the Manchu nobility during the Qing Dynasty (1616–1911). In the early twentieth century, overthrowing the centralized dictatorship was equivalent to toppling the rule of the Manchu nobility. As a result, in order to drive the Qing government off the historical stage, there was no better slogan than "National Revolution." In 1905, when Sun Yat-Sen, the pioneer of China's Bourgeois Revolution (1866–1925), founded the United League (*Tongmenghui*) with various bourgeois political parties, the objectives he put forth in the oath were: expelling the Manchus, restoring Han Chinese rule, founding a republic, and ownership of equal divisions of land.

However, these fresh bourgeois revolutionaries soon became aware of the following practical problem: besides the Han Chinese, China also had a large number of other ethnic groups that have been living in the territory of the unified country ever since ancient times, contributing to China's 5,000-year-old history and culture. Therefore, a question was raised: is the newly-established Republic of China going to include these ethnic groups?

If not, the decision would have been clearly and evidently inconsistent with Chinese history and the unique Chinese cultural tradition that had been in existence for thousands of years.

Liang Qichao (1873–1929), a famous Chinese bourgeoisie thinker, put forth his own doctrine of *nationalism* in earlier times: in order to fight against colonial conquest by imperialism, China must unite the ethnic groups of Han Chinese, Manchu, Hui, Miao, and Tibetan to form a single great ethnic group. In his inaugural address in 1912, Sun Yat-Sen, the Provisional President of the Republic of China, announced to the world: "The foundation of the country lies in the people; and the unification of lands inhabited by the Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan people into one country, means the unification of the Han Chinese, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetan ethnic groups. This is national unification." He further pointed out that all ethnic groups belong to this unified Republic of China, where one ethnic group should not dominate over another, nor should there be any hostility against the Manchus.

During this period, Tsarist Russia instigated the then-Jebtsundamba Khutuktu in Outer Mongolia to declare independence. At that time, the princes of 10 banners of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, also known as the Jirem League, convened two conferences in eastern Mongolia consecutively, to discuss how to stop Outer Mongolia's "independence." In early 1913, the princes of 34 banners in 22 parts of western Mongolia also held a conference and decided to team up with the eastern Mongolian princes to oppose independence. They issued a joint statement: "Mongolian territory and the Chinese mainland are interdependent, and the Han Chinese and Mongolians have been a family for centuries. We Mongolians also belong to the Chinese nation, and therefore, should contribute to maintaining the unity of the Republic."

It was a solemn political proclamation which showed that even in modern times, when the Western nation-state theory was widespread and put into practice around the world, China's destiny and each ethnic group's choice were still determined by China's unique tradition, as well as the mentality formed during her long history and culture.

The Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang, issued in 1924, further elaborated China's nationalism. Kuomintang's nationalism had two meanings: firstly, the Chinese nation seeks liberation independently; secondly, ethnic groups within China are all equal.

Although in modern times, the Chinese people used terms such as *nation* and *nationalism* introduced from the West, they interpreted them based on the reality of Chinese history and culture. Indeed, cultural integrity, solidarity, and indivisibility formed over 5,000 years are the very components of Chinese history and culture that cannot be ignored or transcended. It is also why the Chinese people have had to face their own history and incorporate the modern nation-state theory into China's reality when introducing it to the West.

It is intriguing that from the mid-to-late twentieth century, the terms *nation* and *nationality* gradually lost their unique designation as a modern Western term in academic and news publications in China, and instead were widely used as a generic term that indicated all concepts concerning *ethnic groups,* including *ethnic minorities* both in Chinese history and in reality. For nearly more than half a century, the words *nation* and *nationality* used by China, had nothing to do with the nation-state theory implied in Western societies. Only in Western circumstances would Chinese ethnologists consider using the word *nationality* to indicate ethnic groups in ancient China, for example, when writing books in English. Likewise, some organizations related to ethnic minorities also used the word *nationality* when translating their own names.

The reform and opening up that started in the late 1970s enabled the Chinese people to better understand Western history and culture. Now, many Chinese government agencies, cultural organizations, and scholars related to ethnic minorities use the words *nation, nationality, ethnic group* or *minority* in English translations to refer to *minzu,* depending on the context. There are scholars who have made the following suggestions: to use "Chinese nation" to refer to *zhonghua minzu;* while the terms ethnic group or ethnic minorities should refer to the 56 *minzu* in China. It shows that contemporary Chinese people have finally discovered this huge deviation and have adjusted the meaning to suit the reality of China.

Nationalism in Modern Europe and Culturalism in Ancient China

If the concept of nation in the modern West diverges from its Chinese interpretation, then what are the forms and meanings of *minzu* in ancient China? Both Chinese historians and Western sinologists have discovered a concept known as "culturalism" in the study of Chinese history. Culturalism can be called the nationality of ancient China, in correspondence to nationalism in the modern West.

A performance during the Ethnic Minorities Arts Festival.

Professor John King Fairbank (1907–1991), a prominent American academic and historian, was also given the nickname of "America's Number One Expert on China." He once said: "No doubt, the viewpoint that the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius apply to everything implies that Chinese culture (lifestyle) is more fundamental than nationalism…As long as a person is familiar with Confucian classics and behaves accordingly, his skin color or language no longer matters." According to Fairbank, this was the definition of "culturalism" in ancient China.

Ancient China used culture to govern the country and did not divide people by ethnicity. Descent was not the most important criterion used to classify ethnic groups, nor was appearance, skin color, or even language. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* compiled by Confucius (551–479 B.C.) pronounced: "Vassals are barbarians if they adopt barbaric etiquette; barbarians are Chinese if they adopt Chinese etiquette." This meant that if vassals adopted barbaric etiquette, they would merely be regarded as barbarians; and if barbarians adopted local etiquette when visiting the Central Plains (a term used to refer to ancient China), then they would also be regarded as people of the Central Plains. This was a very liberal attitude!

College students from various ethnic groups watching the flag-raising ceremony at Tiananmen Square.

China's territory is geographically special: it is surrounded by natural barriers, and there is a complete system of geographic features within. Before the Spring-Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.) and Warring States Period (475–256 B.C.), the Chinese people had formed a distinct national outlook, that is, her people believed that being surrounded by seas on all four sides made China the *Tianxia* (literally world)—comprising the Central Plains and *Siyi* (barbarians living at the four directions). Therefore, *Tianxia* is also referred to as a place "within the four seas."

Generally speaking, the *Huaxia* (another term used for the Han Chinese) living at the Central Plains were considered to be more civilized while people living in the surrounding areas were considered to be the *Siyi—Dongyi* (literally barbarians at the East), *Nanman* (literally barbarians at the South), *Xirong* (literally barbarians at the West), and *Beidi* (literally barbarians at the North). In the eyes of the *Huaxia,* the *Siyi* were significantly different from the people of the Central Plains because of their relatively lower level of civilization. During the Xia Dynasty (2070–1600 B.C.), Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 B.C.), and Western Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 B.C.), the *Huaxia* already had frequent contacts and exchanges in various ways with the *Siyi.* During the Spring-Autumn Period and Warring States Period, the geographical pattern became clearer; the Han Chinese were located in the center (therefore called *Zhongguo,* the Middle Kingdom) with barbarians of *Dongyi, Nanman, Xirong,* and *Beidi* in the east, south, west, and north, respectively.

In fact, Fairbank insisted that the extent of ethnic differences within China might be even greater than all the ethnic differences combined in Europe and

America. At the very least, Chinese culture is highly diversified in terms of ethnic groups, ethnic communities, languages, and religions, all of which constitute the cultural diversity of China. With such great cultural diversity, how was China able to maintain her unity for thousands of years?

Ancient Chinese had an unparalleled admiration for the "rites and music culture," and were also optimistic about its distribution and mutual understanding among communities. They claimed: "the Chinese will degrade into barbarians if they are evil, and barbarians will upgrade into Chinese if they are virtuous." The standard did not only apply to the *Siyi,* but also to the inhabitants of the Central Plains who were in a privileged position. Therefore, the door that divided different groups of people was not eternally open or closed; it opened in both directions, providing free access to everyone. When the *Siyi* entered this "door," they became the *Huaxia;* by the same token, *Huaxia* was not an unchangeable tag either, because when the *Huaxia* stepped out this "door," they too became the *Siyi.*

The debate over *Huaxia* and *Siyi* did not always rely on ethnicity but also on the level of civilization a society had achieved. There was always a greater flexibility and dialectics behind the sense of privilege felt by the people of the Central Plains over barbarians. That said, the people of the Central Plains believed that barbarians could become civilized people through "enlightenment." Based on the ethnic-community viewpoint that "everyone is entitled to be educated," Chinese cultural tradition held that the mission of the Middle Kingdom in the Central Plains was to turn barbarians into "people of the Celestial Empire" through enlightenment rather than military occupation; so as to achieve "Great Harmony."

As a matter of fact, the system of enlightenment by the "rites and music culture" was not created solely by the *Huaxia* communities in the Central Plains, but was rather an outcome of communication and integration between people from different areas. For example, the emperors of the Shang Dynasty were from *Dongyi,* the emperors of the Zhou Dynasty were from western areas, and even the *Huaxia* in the Central Plains themselves had originated from pioneer communities, but had over time made progress in history through communication and integration. This is why the fundamental concept in ancient Chinese culture states: "There are *Siyi* in *Huaxia* people and there are also *Huaxia* in *Siyi* people." Based on this notion, a consensus sunk its roots deep within Chinese culture and tradition: people around the world are all equal in terms of origin.

In this way, the standards, which allowed alteration in different contexts, left great historical possibility with the *Siyi.* Owing to the nature of this culturalism, when the *Siyi* had the opportunity to move to the Central Plains, they did not have the motive of occupying the land or destroying the Central Plains

culture. On the contrary, their biggest hope was to become the orthodox "rites and music culture" of the Central Plains themselves. Therefore, culturalism became a highly inclusive historical receptacle, making the culture of the Central Plains a historical heritage to be inherited and passed down instead of being open to attack by later dynastic changes.

Compared with other ancient civilizations in the world, this sense of culturalism can be viewed as flexible and unique to Chinese culture. Its ability to open and close passageways arguably makes it more dynamic and inclusive than other forms of culturalism, while at the same time, allowing for the possibility of achieving integrity, solidarity, and indivisibility in Chinese culture.

The Chinese people offer culturalism as one explanation to Westerners who cannot understand why Chinese civilization has been able to develop uninterrupted for 5,000 years. It also serves to explain why China has been able to maintain a unified multi-ethnic country for more than 2,000 years.

Chapter 2

Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation

Ethnic Identification: How Many Ethnic Groups Are There in China?

The People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded on October 1, 1949, and the first visiting delegation to ethnic communities sent by the central government started in June of 1950. Considering the heavy and complex issues awaiting the newly established country, it can be argued that ethnic minority affairs were also considered a top priority for China.

From 1950 to 1953, the Chinese government sent four delegations simultaneously to ethnic communities in the southwest, northwest, south, and northeast. These large-scale delegations had long journeys before them; the delegation to the southwest, with as many as 120 members, traveled to Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou provinces and stayed for as long as seven months. The delegations' mission was to inform ethnic minorities around the country of the new government's basic policies: the PRC will ensure full equality among all ethnic groups within her territory, respect religious beliefs and folklore customs of all ethnic groups, and develop the economy and culture of ethnic minorities vigorously.

Equality among ethnic groups is the cornerstone of China's ethnic policy. In China, the definition of full equality among ethnic groups includes three aspects: firstly, regardless of the population size, history, area of residence, level of economic development, differences in spoken and written languages, religious beliefs, folkways and customs, every ethnic group has equal political

An autumn scene in the Altay region of northern Xinjiang. The ethnic minorities in Xinjiang account for nearly 60% of the total local population.

status. Secondly, all ethnic groups in China not only have political and legal equality, but also economic, cultural, and social equality. Thirdly, citizens of all ethnic groups are equal before the law, enjoying the same rights and performing the same duties.

New ethnic policies have encouraged self-acknowledgement of ethnic groups and active expression of their own wishes and rights. This can be seen from the results of the first census conducted in 1953—more than 400 ethnic group names were registered, with over 260 names in Yunnan Province alone.

Among these 400 names, some used different names within the same ethnic group, some were names of different branches of an ethnic group, some were ethnic group names based on residence, and some were even different Chinese transliterations of the same name of an ethnic group. This prompted a closer examination of ethnic groups in China, and immediately the task of ethnic identification was set.

Many renowned ethnologists and sociologists in China traveled to several communities, where people were waiting to confirm their ethnic identities. A large number of historians and linguists also participated in this event which was particularly important for the country.

The process of ethnic identification proved to be a very arduous one. It took more than 20 years from 1953, when the State Ethnic Affairs Commission dispatched the first investigative team, to 1979, when the Jino ethnic group was the last one to be identified. Considering the length of time, scale of work, and

A small Tibetan community on the Tibetan Plateau.

the amount of manpower the Chinese government had used, scholars agreed with the following statement: ethnic identification in the twentieth century is the largest and an unprecedented one in Chinese history; it is pioneering work for China and is seldom seen outside of China.

There are three goals of ethnic identification: to identify whether a community belongs to the Han Chinese ethnic group or to the ethnic minorities; to identify whether this ethnic community is a separate ethnic group or part of another ethnic group; and to confirm the ethnic identity and the name of the ethnic group.

In 1953, the identification team for the She minority in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces was the first investigative agency that had been set up to identify ethnic groups. The team leader Shi Lianzhu, later became the most famous scholar in the study of the She minority who also wrote the *Identification of Ethnicity in China.*

Most ethnic communities inhabited areas where transportation was inconvenient, where investigators had to climb mountains and cross rivers on foot. The She minority that Shi and his team were trying to identify had been regarded as part of the Han Chinese ethnic group, or a branch of the Yao minority. After the investigation, however, it was found to be a separate ethnic minority.

What were the criteria of ethnic identification in China? Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin (1897–1953) offered a simple and clear definition of ethnic groups in his book *Marxism and the National Question:* "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language,

The Hulunbeir Grassland in Inner Mongolia is the cradle of the northern nomadic ethnic groups.

territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." This passage provided great inspiration for people working on ethnic affairs in China at that time. Although this definition was put forth for nationalities in modern Western countries, Chinese ethnologists thought it had a universal significance. Therefore, a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up became the four major criteria for ethnic identification in China.

Nevertheless, China's national circumstances at that time must be taken into account. China's ethnic identification incorporated the actual situations of her ethnic minorities, and apart from Stalin's definition, "ethnic willingness," "historical basis," and "proximity identification" became three important principles.

"Ethnic willingness" meant that ethnic identities and names could not be imposed; the local and state governments could not decide the ethnic identities for people; people who wish to be identified as an ethnic group could actively make their wishes heard and had the right to fully negotiate with the government. "Historical basis" meant that apart from field investigation into an ethnic group's daily life, cultural heritage such as voluminous documents, old scriptures, records and stone tablets as well as mythologies and songs, must be fully investigated. "Proximity identification" expressed the following idea: similar ethnic communities, for example, adjacent ethnic communities that basically had the same language, close economic ties, and mutual acknowledgement, should be combined and identified as one ethnic group, so long as this was beneficial to the ethnic groups' own development.

Guizhou is home to numerous ethnic minorities. This picture shows a village of the Dong minority.

During the decade after 1953, ethnic identification gradually entered its climax. Out of all the regions, ethnic identification in Yunnan Province posed the most difficulties. In 1954, the State Ethnic Affair Commission sent an ethnic identification team to Yunnan Province whereby linguists played a pivotal role in the identification process. The phonological system and grammatical structure of language served as a measurable and objective basis for ethnic identification. Over three million people in Yunnan Province spoke the Yi language but used different names for their ethnicity. They were, however, all identified as branches of the Yi minority rather than a separate one, based on the fact that they shared common linguistic characteristics and of course, common cultural traditions such as the Torch Festival, the Native Chieftain System, the taboo that marriage between people bearing the same surname was forbidden, as well as cremation sites, ancestor posts, witchcraft, and so on. In the end, over 260 different ethnic communities in Yunnan Province were consolidated into 22 ethnic groups.

The identification of the Tujia minority was particularly tortuous. The Tujia minority had no written language of their own but spoke Chinese prevalently, sparked a great academic controversy in its identification as a separate ethnic group. Pan Guangdan (1899–1967), a main figure in this process, firmly believed that the Tujia minority did not belong to the Miao or Yao minorities in the area, and that it was a dependent ethnic minority originating from ancient Ba people. Although Pan suffered from severe myopia, he made

Terraced paddy fields of the Hani minority in Yuanyang, Yunnan Province.

more than 1,300 notes related to the Tujia minority and ancient Ba people. Even with an injured leg, he traveled across the vast lands of the Tujia minority on crutches. Eventually in January 1957, the Tujia minority was officially recognized as a unique ethnic group.

When the Cultural Revolution started in 1966, the last ethnic minority that had been identified was the Lhoba minority living in the Shannan and Linzhi regions of Tibet. Until then, 54 ethnic minorities in China had been identified, leaving only a few unidentified ones.

During the Cultural Revolution, ethnic identification came to a halt. In 1978, with the reform and opening up of China, ethnic identification was started again. In Yunnan Province, an ethnologist named Du Yuting took on the academic debate from over a decade ago: were the Jino people inhabiting collectively on Jino Mountain in Jinghong County, Yunnan Province, truly a branch of the Yi minority? Du returned to Jino Mountain and began to collect more evidence and conduct further research. In the same year, a research group of 30 to 40 people, which included historians, linguists, and ethnologists, also went to Jino Mountain. The result of their collective study was that the Jino people were indeed a separate ethnic group.

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FIFTY-FIVE ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CHINA

Ethnicity	Main Habitats	Population (people)
Mongol	Inner-Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Xinjiang	5,813,947
Hui	Ningxia, Gansu, Henan, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Yunnan, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Liaoning, Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Tianjin, Heilongjiang, Shaanxi, Guizhou, Jilin, Jiangsu, Sichuan	9,816,805
Tibetan	Tibet, Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan	5,416,021
Uygur	Xinjiang	8,399,393
Miao	Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangxi, Chongqing, Hubei, Sichuan	8,940,116

Ethnicity	Main Habitats	Population (people)
Yi	Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou	7,762,272
Zhuang	Guangxi, Yunnan, Guangdong	16,178,811
Bouyei	Guizhou	2,971,460
Korean	Jilin, Heilongjiang, Liaoning	1,923,842
Manchu	Liaoning, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Inner Mongolia, Beijing	10,682,262
Dong	Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi	2,960,293
Yao	Guangxi, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangdong	2,637,421
Bai	Yunnan, Guizhou, Hunan	1,858,063
Tujia	Hunan, Hubei, Chongqing, Guizhou	8,028,133
Hani	Yunnan	1,439,673
Kazak	Xinjiang	1,250,458
Dai	Yunnan	1,158,989
Li	Hainan	1,247,814
Lisu	Yunnan, Sichuan	634,912
Va	Yunnan	396,610
She	Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Guangdong	709,592
Gaoshan*	Taiwan, Fujian	4,461
Lahu	Yunnan	453,705
Sui	Guizhou, Guangxi	406,902
Dongxiang	Gansu, Xinjiang	513,805
Naxi	Yunnan	308,839

Ethnicity	Main Habitats	Population (people)
Jingpo	Yunnan	132,143
Kirgiz	Xinjiang	160,823
Tu	Qinghai, Gansu	241,198
Daur	Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang	132,394
Mulam	Guangxi	207,352
Qiang	Sichuan	306,072
Blang	Yunnan	91,882
Salar	Qinghai	104,503
Maonan	Guangxi	107,166
Gelao	Guizhou	579,357
Xibe	Liaoning, Xinjiang	188,824
Achang	Yunnan	33,936
Pumi	Yunnan	33,600
Tajik	Xinjiang	41,028
Nu	Yunnan	28,759
Ozbek	Xinjiang	12,370
Russian	Xinjiang, Heilongjiang	15,609
Ewenki	Inner Mongolia	30,505
De'ang	Yunnan	17,935
Bonan	Gansu	16,505
Yugur	Gansu	13,719
Jing	Guangxi	22,517
Tatar	Xinjiang	4,890

Ethnicity	Main Habitats	Population (people)
Derung	Yunnan	7,426
Oroqen	Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia	8,196
Hezhen	Heilongjiang	4,640
Monba	Tibet	8,923
Lhoba	Tibet	2,965
Jino	Yunnan	20,899

SOURCE: Population data taken from the 2000 Census.

*The population of the Gaoshan minority does not include Taiwan Province.

On June 6, 1979, the Jino minority of slightly over 20,000 people officially became the last ethnic minority identified in China during the twentieth century.

Thus far, 55 ethnic minorities in China had been officially identified. In effect, there are still a few remaining ethnic communities that are waiting to be identified, and therefore, this work has yet to completely end.

Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation

Neither visiting delegations to ethnic regions, shortly after the establishment of the PRC, nor ethnic identification starting from 1953, had made the Chinese government believe her understanding of ethnic minorities was sufficient. In 1956, a larger scale investigation on the sociological history of ethnic minorities began around the country.

This investigation was proposed by Mao Zedong (1893–1976), and was implemented by the National People's Congress' Ethnic Affairs Committee. The plan was to obtain a clearer picture of the situation of major ethnic minorities in China in the following four to seven years.

More than 1,000 scholars took part in this massive undertaking. According to incomplete statistics, the investigation comprised: over 340 investigative reports, which included written works with a total of 29 million words—of which 15 million words were derived from a collection of over 100 archives and

excerpts—and over 10 documentaries. By 1966, the scholars involved in the investigation submitted primary research findings on China's ethnic minorities, which resulted in 57 draft manuscripts collectively titled as *Concise History, Brief Records,* and *History and Brief Records.* This was an important event for the Chinese people in attaining a sensible understanding of the ethnic minorities of China.

The famous Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong (1910–2005), was the major organizer and participant of the investigation on the sociological history of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, he was also a key person in a series of important historical events related to ethnic minorities in the 1950s, and accompanied many of the visiting delegations that traveled to several ethnic communities. It was after his close contacts with ethnic minorities that resulted in several crucial historical questions formed in his mind: in China, how had the sociological histories of the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities influenced each another? What were the ethnic minorities' effects on the formation of the Han Chinese ethnic group? How should the "Chinese nation," which includes the Han Chinese ethnic group and 55 other ethnic minorities be understood?

He dwelt on these questions for as long as 30 years. In 1989, Fei first presented his work *Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation* at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His work immediately received strong attention from academia. After many intense academic debates, his ideas were gradually improved upon, and they have since become the basis of a mainstream theory explaining the origin, formation, and development of the Chinese nation.

Fei's *Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation* is regarded as the theory that explains the formation of the Chinese nation, including her 55 ethnic minorities. It states that: "The Chinese nation's mainstream shows a pattern of diversity in unity, which was formed by communicating, mixing, allaying, and integrating as well as splitting and declining; all components interact and integrate with each other, but also maintain their own characteristics." The paper talks about the formation process: "As early as 3,000 years ago, a core community, called *Huaxia,* formed by several ethnic groups converging and integrating, came into being in the middle reaches of the Yellow River, and started to snowball and affiliate with other surrounding ethnic groups. When they occupied the plains in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and Yellow River in East Asia, others called them the Han Chinese. The Han Chinese absorbed parts of other ethnic groups and enlarged itself continuously. It also migrated to other ethnic groups' compact communities and formed a network that played a unifying and connecting role. It laid the foundation for an indivisible united community consisting of many ethnic groups in this region, became an ethnic entity, and eventually identified themselves as Chinese people."

The *Huaxia* ethnic community—the precursor to the Han Chinese—had diverse origins. It began with the interaction and integration of different

cultures in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. During the Western Zhou Dynasty, cultures in various regions still maintained their own characteristics. However, due to massive population fluxes and regional shifts which occurred during the 500 years of Spring-Autumn Period and Warring States Period, several cultures were forced to engage and interact with one another, driving Chinese history into its first climax when the Han Chinese began maturing into an ethnic entity.

The term *Han* became an ethnic group identifier at the initial stage of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589). A large number of nomadic people such as *Xianbei, Hun, Di, Qiang,* and *Jie* entered the Central Plains one after another in the fourth and fifth century during the integration of the Han Chinese and non-Han vassals. Thus, the Han became known as the original residents of the Central Plains. During the Southern and Northern Dynasties, ethnic groups were living among one another and interacting. It was during this dynamic period when diverse Han ethnic communities gradually became unified. By the end of this dynasty, all these nomadic people traveling in the Central Plains integrated themselves into one ethnic group which eventually became known as the Han. Their own ethnic group names disappeared one by one; their cultures were absorbed by the Han culture and also became part of it. This was a result of intermarriages, which were very common at the time between ethnic groups that were living in the same area. Furthermore, the development of the Han during this period is historically significant as it also gave rise to China's traditional "culturalism."

With the demise of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, this brought about the unification of the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) dynasties. The ruling classes in both dynasties had non-Han origins themselves. The royal court of the Sui Dynasty was full of *Xianbei* statesmen, and even King Wen of Sui Dynasty, the founder of the dynasty, married a *Xianbei.* The subsequent Tang Dynasty inherited this practice and Li Yuan (618–626), the founder of the Tang Dynasty, was born to a *Xianbei* mother and married a *Xianbei* to be his queen. In early Tang Dynasty, *Xianbei* nobles who were willing to be converted by the Han Chinese culture played a pivotal role and were serving in important positions from the very beginning. In other words, the Tang Dynasty that the Chinese are so proud of is actually one great dynasty that was created by many ethnic groups. Though it was ruled by the Han Chinese in name, all ethnic groups had in fact participated in the administration.

Ethnic group names such as *Xianbei, Di,* and *Jie* disappeared at the end of the Sui and Tang dynasties. For nearly 500 years from the Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Tang Dynasty, the Central Plains became a melting pot of ethnic groups, with the Han Chinese serving as the core ethnic group.

Thereafter, the Northern Song (960–1127) and Southern Song (1127–1279) dynasties continued to interact actively with emerging nomadic people in the north. The *Qidan* ethnic group set up a strong Liao Kingdom, but when the name *Qidan* spread to Europe as a byword of China, the *Qidan* ethnic group itself had already disappeared from the lands of the Central Plains. The bulk of the *Qidan* ethnic group had been conquered and destroyed by other northern nomadic people called *Nvzhen,* leaving the remaining *Qidan* minority to gradually become members of the Han people. The *Dangxiang* people, who established the Xixia Kingdom in northwest China, dating back to the Northern Song Dynasty, also vanished after a 200-year-long era of prosperity when they were devastated by Mongolian military forces. Again, those remaining *Dangxiang* people later peacefully integrated themselves to become Han Chinese.

The historical evolution of the Chinese shows that the Han Chinese is by no means an ethnic group with only one origin. At the same time, during all periods in Chinese history, there were always trends that moved in the opposite direction too. In other regions, the Han Chinese also fused with other ethnic groups.

Many Han Chinese moved to the *Siyi* areas due to factors such as wars, natural disasters, and military settlement. For example, the war at the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty prompted more than 100,000 households to flee to areas where the *Wuhuan* ethnic group lived. These Han Chinese who had moved to border ethnic regions had to change their lifestyle and folklore in order to adapt to the new local environment and social life surrounding them, and subsequently they became a part of local ethnic groups.

The Gaochang Kingdom was set up by the Qu ethnic group in Turfan, Xinjiang, in 499. It was originally a state consisting mostly of settled soldiers during the Han-Wei Period and fleeing Han Chinese during the Jin Dynasty, but they discarded the Han Chinese way of dressing and linguistic traditions. In the end, it was assimilated into the Uygur minority.

Such a phenomenon was very common. The Han Chinese that migrated to Yunnan Province during the thousands of years before the Ming Dynasty also mostly integrated into local ethnic groups. The Bai ethnic group is an example of yet another ethnic group that incorporated people of Han Chinese origin.

As for the formation of the Tibetan minority, Gelek Lobsang, the first Tibetan scholar who earned a Ph.D. in China, drew the following conclusion based on his long-term research: "The ancient Tibetan culture does not fall from the sky, but instead it was formed on the basis of the original culture in the southern valley of Tibet, by absorbing and integrating the primitive nomadic culture in the northern grassland and nomadic people belonging to the *Hu* ethnic strain, as well as *Yangshao* culture in the Central Plains and ethnic groups belonging to the *Di* and *Qiang* ethnic strains."

The Potala Palace in the city center of Lhasa, the symbol of Tibetan history and culture.

Speaking further on the subject, Fei also mentioned in *Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation:* "Speaking from the viewpoint of biological basis, or so-called 'lineage,' mixing and blending often occur in the 'unity' of the Chinese nation, so there is not a single ethnic group that is 'purebred' in terms of lineage."

Diversity and unity are two indivisible and interdependent trends that ethnic groups in China have demonstrated over her long history. After the Opium War in 1840, in the fight against the invasion of Western imperialism and Japanese militarism, people from all ethnic groups formed a self-conscious ethnic entity, which later proved to stand together through times of thick and thin.

Thus, the diversity in the unified Chinese nation, formed in this manner, has the following aspects, according to the *Diversity in a Unified Chinese Nation:*

"Firstly, the Chinese nation is an ethnic entity that includes 56 ethnic groups in China, rather than a generic name for 56 ethnic groups simply added together. Fifty-six ethnic groups have already formed an interdependent and indivisible unity, in which all the components have already obtained a higher level of ethnic recognition, for example, to share weal and woe, to live or die together, to share glory and shame, and to share a common destiny. Secondly, diversity in unity must go through a process where scattered components gradually unite together. There needs to be a core that plays a unifying role.

The Han Chinese is one of the many basic components that has unified all the components, but this unity is no longer the Han Chinese but the Chinese nation—an ethnic group of higher recognition. Third, high-level recognition does not necessarily replace or reject lower level recognition. Different levels can coexist, even make good use of their original strengths based on this pattern, and form a unity of multiple languages and cultures."

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF "GREAT UNITY" IN ANCIENT CHINA

As early as the time before the Qin Dynasty, the concepts of "country" and "unification" had taken shape in the minds of the Chinese people. In 221 B.C., the Qin Dynasty unified the country for the first time. It put the regions, including today's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan Province, where the ethnic minorities were concentrated, under her jurisdiction. The subsequent Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – A.D. 220) further consolidated the country's unification. It set up the Protectorate of the Western Regions in today's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and added 17 prefectures to govern all ethnic groups. The Qin and Han dynasties created the fundamental framework of China as a unified multi-ethnic country.

The Tang Dynasty (618–907) established the Anxi Protector-General's Office and Beiting Protector-General's Office to manage administrative affairs in the Western Regions, including today's Xinjiang, and set up the administrative levels of *Dao, Fu,* and *Zhou* (equivalent to today's province, prefecture, and county) to govern ethnic groups in southern and southwestern China. The Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368), established by the Mongols, appointed aboriginal officials or *tuguan* (literally hereditary posts of local administrators filled by chiefs of ethnic minorities) in the *Fu* and *Zhou* of the southern regions where ethnic groups lived in compact communities. The central government set up the Commission for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs to administer Tibet.

The Yuan Dynasty also saw the founding of the Penghu Military Inspectorate for the administration of the Penghu Islands and Taiwan. Most of modern China's ethnic groups were subjects of the Yuan Dynasty. The Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), founded by the Manchus, set up the Ili Generalship and Xinjiang Province in the Western Regions, appointed the Grand Resident Minister in Tibet and established the system of conferring honorific titles on two Living Buddhas—the Dalai and Panchen—by the central government. In addition, the Qing court carried out a series of political reforms in southwestern China, by replacing the governing power of local hereditary aboriginal chieftains with a system of appointment of local administrators by the central government in the ethnic communities. Since then, China's territory has remained the same as we know today.

Chapter 3

An Overview of China's Ethnic Minority Populations

The Population of Ethnic Groups in China

China is the world's most populous country, with her population of Han Chinese ranked the largest of all ethnic groups in the world.[1] There are also other impressive figures on the ethnic populations within China: the Zhuang minority, the most populous ethnic minority in China, has a population of 16.18 million, equivalent to that of a medium-sized country in Europe. Meanwhile, the Lhoba minority, the least populous ethnic group in China, has a mere population of 2,965 which is 5,550 times smaller than the Zhuang ethnic group.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the central government has carried out a series of five large-scale censuses around the country. The first was in 1953, and it ascertained that the population of ethnic groups was 34.0138 million. This was the first time such a task had been completed in China's history of over a thousand years. None of the previous dynasties had compiled any statistics regarding ethnic minority populations. Therefore, until this census, the populations of the ethnic minorities had long been a "huge mystery."

The most recent census taken in 2000 was also the largest one in Chinese history. Its results showed that the total population of China's ethnic minorities had reached 106.43 million. From 1953 to 2000, the ethnic minority

[1]According to a census taken in 2000, there were 1.159 billion Han Chinese in mainland China.

This picture shows a young lady from the Zhuang minority making a handicraft. The Zhuang is the largest ethnic minority in China and they mainly live in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

population in China had increased by 2.07 times. During the same period, the total population for mainland China had increased by 1.15 times; while the population of the Han Chinese in mainland China had increased by 1.10 times.

The results showed that for 50 years between the first and the fifth census, the growth rate of China's ethnic minority population was much higher than that of the average total population growth and that of the average population growth of the Han Chinese. The results of the fifth census also showed that ethnic minority populations accounted for 8.41% of the total population in mainland China. In the third census held in 1982, ethnic minority populations accounted for 6.62% of the total population in mainland China; and in the fourth census in 1990, the proportion was 8.01%. This meant that the proportion of ethnic minorities among the country's total population was rising year after year.

In addition, the 2000 census also disclosed some other significant details: among 55 ethnic minorities, the number of ethnic groups whose populations

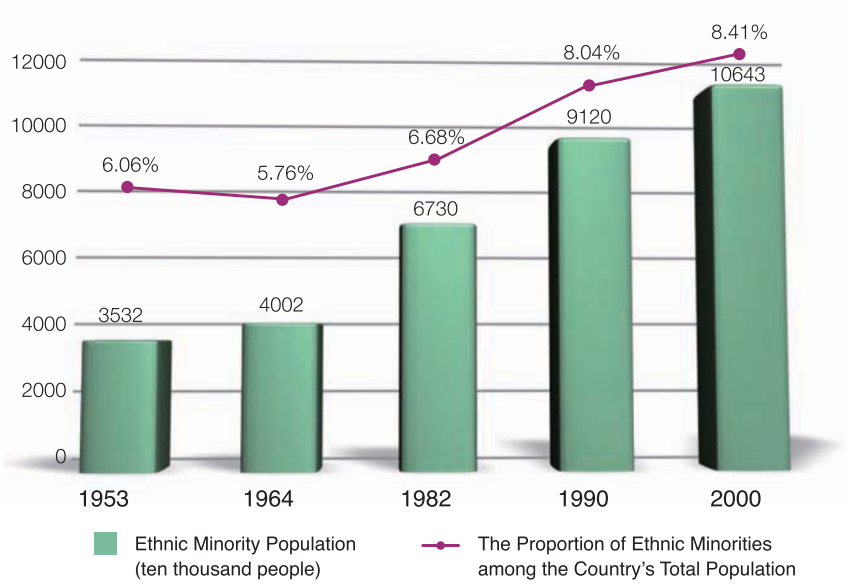
This picture shows a young man from the Lhoba minority. The Lhoba minority is the least populated ethnic group in China and they mainly live in southeast Tibet.

were larger than 10 million had increased from the Zhuang minority, to the Zhuang and Manchu minorities; while the Hui, Miao, and Uygur minorities were fast approaching this number. The number of ethnic groups whose populations were larger than one million had increased from 10 groups in 1953, to 18 groups in 2000.

There were 20 ethnic groups whose populations were smaller than 50,000, among which eight groups had populations smaller than 10,000. While the populations of most ethnic minorities were rising, their growth rates differed from one to another.

As many as 38 ethnic groups had a fast-growing or an extremely fast-growing population, including the Gelao minority (8.80%), the Tujia minority (7.78%), the Jing minority (4.66%), the Xibo minority (4.96%), the Qiang minority (4.64%), the Hezhen minority (5.26%), the Lhoba minority (5.72%), and the Maonan minority (4.40%). Eleven ethnic group populations were also growing relatively fast, including the Tibetan, Uygur, and Yi minorities whose populations were larger than one million. However, the population of the Korean minority was growing relatively slower. Meanwhile, three ethnic

This picture shows a group of elderly people from the Hui minority. The Hui minority has the widest population distribution in China, and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is the largest region inhabited by the Hui people in compact communities.



Proportion of ethnic minorities in five censuses

groups that had seen their populations decrease: the Russian (–7.83%), Ozbek (–0.20%), and Tartar (–0.73%) minorities.

Population Policies toward Ethnic Minorities in China

China's population policies toward ethnic minorities are made in accordance with practices adopted by the ethnic minorities from different periods; social and economic development in ethnic regions; and the wishes of the ethnic minorities. Since 1950, population policies toward ethnic minorities have gone through three phases:

Policies to Boost the Population (1950–1970)

Policies in this period were made according to two main factors: firstly, at the birth of the People's Republic of China, natural growth rates of some ethnic minority populations were low, and some groups even saw their populations decreasing. They were on the verge of "extinction" as their populations continued to drop. Secondly, most ethnic minorities were still using a traditional economic model in which social development relied directly on the increase of their labor force.

Based on these causes, the Chinese government employed a policy aimed at boosting the ethnic minorities' populations.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the populations of some ethnic minorities plummeted deeply. According to official statistics, up till 1951, when serfdom was still in place in Tibet, the death rate was as high as 28 per 1,000 people and the infant mortality rate was as high as 430 per 1,000 people—that is to say, nearly half of every 1,000 infants died at birth, or shortly thereafter.

The Oroqen minority is an ethnic group living in northeastern China. Reportedly, her population in 1917 was around 4,000 people, about 3,000 in 1938, and declined to 2,256 by 1953. Over the last 36 years, her population had decreased by 45.12%. Such slumps were rarely seen in history.

The government's population policy yielded positive results soon after its implementation. In 1953, ethnic minority populations stopped declining and began to start increasing steadily. By the mid-1960s, ethnic minority populations started to rise rapidly. According to official statistics, China's total

This picture shows hunters from the Oroqen minority. The Oroqen ethnic group lives mainly in Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang.

ethnic minority population increased from 34 million in 1953 to 39 million in 1964. The population of the Oroqen minority also increased steadily. By 1990, her population reached 6,965 people, and by 2000, this number had already climbed to 8,196.

The Early Years of the Family Planning Policy (1971–1981)

In the 1970s, the Chinese government began carrying out the family planning policy in regions where the Han Chinese was living, encouraging couples to have only one child. But the government exempted all ethnic minorities from following this policy.

During this period, the government continued to encourage the population growth of ethnic minorities. By 1980, the fertility rate of ethnic minority women was 4.49, or 69.43% higher than that of the Han Chinese (2.65). From 1964 to 1982, the total ethnic minority population saw a net increase of 26 million, accounting for 78.06% of the total population of ethnic minorities in 1953.

This picture shows herdsmen from the Mongol minority.

A More Flexible Family Planning Policy (1982–present)

Population policies toward ethnic minorities in this period were made based on the fact that the populations of ethnic minorities were growing too fast that also brought about a series of challenges. In some regions, the overpopulation of ethnic minorities has hindered economic development. The National Family Planning Commission sent experts to ethnic regions such as Guangxi and Yunnan for field tours several times and noted that the baby boom in these areas has caused problems to living standards. In order to meet the demand of larger populations, some ethnic minorities have had to cut down trees and reclaim wasteland, leading to various ecological disasters such as severe water loss, soil erosion, growing desertification, and petrifaction.

The difficulties arising in such population growth has triggered a debate: should ethnic minorities be subjected to the family planning policy?

Meanwhile, the Han Chinese have reached a consensus over the family planning policy. The phrase "have fewer children so that you can get rich faster" has become a popular sentiment among them. This has convinced some government officials and scholars from ethnic minorities to be in favor of implementing the family planning policy on ethnic minorities. However, there is a opposing viewpoint that population growth should be encouraged to make

A folk dance by the Uygur minority—the "Maxrap."

up for the shortage of labor in China, since ethnic minority populations are still much smaller than that of the Han Chinese, and compact communities of ethnic minorities are sparsely populated.

The Chinese government investigated both viewpoints. The new ethnic minority population policy has fully considered the overall situation of ethnic minorities against different demographic backdrops in different regions, with its guiding principle as follows: the wishes of ethnic minorities should be respected and policies should be made according to local conditions; the governments of ethnic autonomous regions have the right to decide whether or not, when, and how to implement the family planning policy on ethnic minorities. Therefore, the family planning policy was gradually implemented in ethnic regions. It was carried out in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in 1984; and in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1988.

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region states that: workers, urban residents, and farmers are allowed to have two children if a couple or either the husband or wife is from an ethnic minority. Ethnic minority farmers living in mountainous areas are allowed to have three children. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region states that: if both the husband and wife are from ethnic

This picture shows women from the Gaoshan minority performing a dance. The Gaoshan minority inhabits Taiwan but more than 4,000 people from their total population of 400,000 are living in mainland China.

minorities whose populations are smaller than 10 million, they are allowed to have two children.

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region states that: for urban residents of ethnic minorities, couples are allowed to have two children; for herdsmen and farmers of ethnic minorities, couples are allowed to have three to four children, if they meet certain requirements; for people of ethnic minorities that have a population of less than 50,000, couples are allowed to have four children.

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region stipulates: for the Mongol minority, couples are allowed to have two children; non-urban Mongolian couples are allowed to have three children; and no restrictions shall be placed upon ethnic minorities with extremely low populations such as the Daur, Ewenki, and Oroqen minorities; for other ethnic minorities, couples are allowed to have two children.

Yunnan, Guizhou, and Qinghai provinces respectively state that: ethnic minority couples can have two children; for ethnic minorities under special circumstances, farmers and herdsmen can have three children with government

approval; the family planning policy does not apply to ethnic minorities with populations lower than 100,000. There is no quota for births too.

Tibet is an exception. Since the vast lands of Tibet are sparsely populated, the family planning policy only applies to government officials, workers, and urban residents who account for 12% of the total population of the entire region. It does not apply to Tibetans in rural and pastoral areas who account for 88% of the total population in this region. There is no quota for births. This policy for Tibet has remained unchanged since 1982.

Improvements of Demographic Indicators of the Ethnic Minorities with Respect to the Han Chinese

Zhang Tianlu is China's foremost expert on demographic studies of ethnic minorities. In December 1989, Zhang published his book, *Demographics of*

This picture shows the fishermen of the Jing minority who lives near the Northern Gulf in Guangxi Province. The Jing minority is the only coastal settlers among all the ethnic minorities in China.

Ethnic Minorities. It heralded the birth of ethnic minority demography as an academic discipline in China.

The fourth census in 1990 provided a precious research opportunity for the new discipline. Zhang analyzed the results of the census immediately and drew some important conclusions.

His research made during this period centered on how the demographic indicators of the ethnic minorities had caught up and nearly reached the level of the Han Chinese. This had drawn great media attention. The research was based on the following premise: historically speaking, China's ethnic minorities generally or significantly lagged behind the Han Chinese in terms of culture, economy, and other areas. It has long been a commonly accepted view that ethnic minorities lagged behind the Han Chinese. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the government proposed that ethnic minorities should catch up and move closer to the Han Chinese in all aspects. This viewpoint then begs the question: can ethnic minorities catch up with the Han Chinese? When will they do so?

Based on the data from the 1990 census, Zhang made a detailed analysis and drew the following conclusions: by 1990, a total of 26 ethnic minorities had surpassed the Han Chinese in one or more of 22 indicators such as natural population growth, women's fertility rate, infant mortality, average life expectancy, adult illiteracy rate, overall average educational level, urbanization level, tertiary industry, and quality of life. Among them, the Korean minority

A Korean girl wearing the *hanbok,* the traditional dress of the Korean minority. The Korean minority lives mainly in the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jinlin, and Liaoning.

surpassed the Han Chinese in 20 demographic indicators; the Manchu minority had surpassed 18 indicators; the Xibe minority had surpassed 14 indicators, and the Russian minority had surpassed 13 indicators; both the Gaoshan and Ozbek minorities had surpassed 10 indicators; the Daur minority has surpassed nine indicators; the Mongol, Tatar, Hezhen, Yugur, and Ewenki minorities had surpassed eight indicators; the Jing and Hui minorities had surpassed seven indicators; the Kazak minority had surpassed five indicators; both the Tujia and Mulam minorities has surpassed four indicators; the Maonan minority had surpassed three indicators; the Zhuang and She minorities had surpassed two indicators; the Tibetan, Hani, Naxi, Gelao and Bouyei minorities had surpassed one indicator.

Zhang's conclusions have punctured a persistent traditional viewpoint in Chinese society: ethnic minorities have always lagged behind the Han Chinese. With these objective demographic indicators, he delivered a strong message to the Chinese people: some ethnic minorities have demonstrated demographic advantages over the Han Chinese in some fields.

Important Demographic Research on the Tibetans

Tibetan population problems have received much attention from many local and international scholars due to its special, mysterious, and sensitive nature. It has become a research focus since the 1980s.

The research carried out has identified the following issues with the Tibetan population:

The first issue is Tibet's population size. There is no agreement on Tibet's largest population size, historically speaking. Some say the number is 945,000, some say six million, while others say it used to be as large as 10 million or even 33 million. Before the 1950s, there was no household registration system or census in Tibet. However, the first census carried out by China in 1953 recorded the Tibetan population as one million, based on reports by the local Tibetan government led by the Dalai Lama.

The second issue concerns marriages, births, and deaths, which are considered to be serious enough to warrant action. According to the 1990 census, many of the problems stem from her elderly population (those born before 1930). Of this demographic, the non-marriage rate among women aged from 65 to 69 was reported at 10.8%; the prevalence of lifetime infertility among women aged from 60 to 64 was 17.7%, 16.3 percentage points higher than the national average; the fertility rate of Tibetan women at the childbearing age

This picture shows Tibetan women on the streets of Lhasa, Tibet.

prior to the democratic reform in 1959 fluctuated between 3.01 to 3.85, which was a striking contrast against the natural birth rate of more than 5.0 at home and abroad. In 1951, infant mortality in Tibet was as high as 430 per 1,000 people and their average life expectancy was only 35 years.

The third issue is the complete absence of modern education. Before the 1950s, there was not a single modern school in Tibet because Tibetan monastic education was the mainstream education. The adult illiteracy rate was as high as 90.6%, with 80% among men and 97.6% among women.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Tibetan population, however, underwent several changes.

Firstly, the population growth of Tibet accelerated significantly. In the second census in 1964, the total population in Tibet was 1.251 million, among which 1.209 million were Tibetans. In the third census in 1982, the total population in Tibet was 1.892 million, among which 1.786 million were Tibetans. In the fourth census in 1990, the total population in Tibet was 2.196 million, among which 2.096 million were Tibetans.

Since 1970, the birth rate and natural population growth rate have both been higher than the national averages. From 1982 to 1990, the Tibetan population in Tibet increased by 309,800, with a natural growth rate of 17.34 per 1,000 people, 2.64 per 1,000 people higher than the average natural national growth over the same period.

At the same time, Tibetans have always accounted for an overwhelming majority of the total population in Tibet. In 1982, the Han Chinese and other ethnic minorities accounted for 4.85% and 0.75% of the total population in Tibet Autonomous Region, respectively. In 1982, the Han Chinese and other ethnic minorities accounted for 3.68% and 0.82%. In 1996, both numbers decreased to 2.9% and 0.8%, respectively.

Since the 1950s, the health care industry that includes Tibetan and modern medicine has developed quickly. Tibet, the only region in mainland China where the entire population enjoys free medical services, has seen decreases in her death rate from 28% in 1951 to 11.6% in 1967, to 9.72% in 1981 and 7.4% in 1990. Meanwhile, the infant mortality rate decreased from 430 per 1,000 people in 1951 to 155.2 per 1,000 people in 1981, 136.0 per 1,000 people in 1987 and 97.4 per 1,000 people in 1990. Meanwhile, the death rate of pregnant women decreased from 50 per 1,000 people in 1951 to 14.3 per 1,000 people in 1985, to 5.7 per 1,000 people in 1994. The average life expectancy in Tibet increased from 35 in 1951, to 56.95 in 1987, and to 59.61 in 1990.

From 1982 to 1995, the proportion of college-educated people in Tibetan population increased from 0.42% to 0.78%, but it was still much lower than the national average of 2.03%. The illiteracy rate of people more than 15 years of age dropped to 61.50%, but the figure was still 45 percentage points higher than the national average of 16.48%. Meanwhile, the mean value of the overall average educational level increased to 2.19, accounting for 34.76% of the national average. Therefore, there is still a long way to go in improving the educational level in Tibet.

Latest Trends of Population Mobility

On September 18, 2002, two Luoba people from Tibet settled in the China Folk Culture Village in Shenzhen. This was not a minor event—before this, people from 54 ethnic minorities, totaling 220,000 people, were living in Shenzhen. But after this historic event, Shenzhen became the second city, apart from Beijing, to have 55 ethnic minorities living together in one city.

This historic event merely took Shenzhen, the frontier city of reform and opening up in China, 20 years. In 1982, there were 372 ethnic minority people in Shenzhen; and over 225,000 in 2002, an increase of 600 times. At the same time, Shenzhen's total population grew only by about 35 times.

This picture shows the representatives of 56 ethnic groups living in Shenzhen.

The progress of reform and opening up also reflects the migratory pattern of a large number of ethnic minority people moving to the urban and coastal areas of China. As such, there are many other cities similar to Shenzhen in this aspect.

While Beijing was the first city to have people from 55 ethnic minorities living together; by 2008, there were people from 53 ethnic minorities living together in Shanghai, and 37 ethnic minorities in Changchun and Shenyang.

Ethnic minority populations are increasing dramatically in the coastal areas of China, which was not traditionally inhabited by ethnic minorities. The autonomous region of Guangxi has the largest ethnic minority population in China, and from 1990 to 2000, the ethnic minority population in Guangxi grew by 3.82%. Meanwhile, her neighboring province Guangdong—a coastal province that ranks high in China for its economic development—had its ethnic minority population increased by 246% over the same period. At the same time, the coastal provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu, which have a relatively higher level of economic development, also saw their ethnic minority populations grow by over 50%.

According to statistics released by China's ethnic affairs departments since the 1980s, there have been around nine million transient and permanent ethnic minority people living in the urban areas in China, forming compact communities of different sizes.

All the facts mentioned above have added a new key phrase in China's work on ethnic minorities after the reform and opening up: "Ethnic Work in Urban Areas."

Protecting the rights of ethnic minorities has become the centerpiece of ethnic work in urban areas. Because of spatial distance as well as cultural

and psychological differences, how migrant ethnic minority people and local residents adapt to one another is often a complicated process. This makes ethnic minority work in urban areas rather difficult and particularly sensitive in China. Hence, the country aims to guarantee the rights of migrant ethnic minority people in urban areas by formulating relevant laws and regulations.

Chapter 4

Policies of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in China

China's Ethnic Policy through the Eyes of Trudeau

Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919–2000) was the most famous politician in Canada's history. He also served two terms as the Prime Minister of Canada. In 1960, when he was living in the province of Quebec and working as a commentator on current affairs, Trudeau and his friend Jacques Hebert (1923–2007) visited China at the invitation of the Chinese government. Trudeau and Hebert (who later became a Canadian senator) stayed in China for one month and toured the country from Changchun in the north to Guangzhou in the south. In Beijing, when asked what they wished to see in China, Trudeau replied: "Canadians are rather different, we are very interested in the issues concerning China's ethnic minorities."

At the time, Canada was gradually experiencing conflicts among ethnic groups, disputes over languages, and constitutional disagreements. Ethnic problems had become a political debate at the heart of the Canadian government.

The two guests were invited to visit the Central Academy of National Minorities. After visiting the institution that was responsible for the education of ethnic minority intellectuals, they said: "No doubt, life is full of happiness in this small world." Trudeau and Hebert later wrote down everything they observed in China in the book *Two Innocents in Red China*. Its fifth chapter "Ethnic Minorities in China" was devoted to their visit to the Central Academy of National Minorities.

Certainly, Trudeau and Hebert's understanding of China's ethnic policy did not come solely from their visit to the Central Academy of National Minorities. The two Canadian friends strived to understand more about China's ethnic issues and policies. In their book, they wrote: "From the perspective of the Chinese government's structure, ethnic minorities have more seats than they are supposed to have: the total population of 51 ethnic minorities[1] was only 38 million, accounting for 6% of China's total population. However, they have 14.5% representation in terms of the number of seats in the National People's Congress. The powerful Chinese government does not try to convert ethnic minorities but strives to preserve their ethnic minority features instead, especially their languages."

"Shortly after China's liberation, of the 51 ethnic minorities, only 21 had their own written languages. Linguists created 16 different languages and improved on three kinds. With China's complicated linguistic problems, this practice makes us think that we should indeed seriously consider their policy, which does not take the path of cultural assimilation but strives to ensure that these new languages will be able to exist forever," the two Canadians wrote.

The ethnic minority policy adopted by China in terms of language, astonished and shocked both Trudeau and Hebert. At that time in Canada, the government was not able to bring the complicated dispute between the use of

The Hui people living in Beijing voting for their National People's Congress' representatives.

[1]In 1960, only 51 ethnic minorities had been identified in China as the census had not been completed then.

English and French under control. However, the government in China went as far as to create languages for ethnic groups that did not have their own.

In the 1960s, China encountered a series of "misunderstandings" and "refusals to be understood" by the rest of the world due to the Cold War. But Trudeau and Hebert saw several things in this very country that made their stances objective.

"A small coincidence has enabled us to note a few conclusive signs. While studying 'The National Agricultural Development Plan,' the 24th clause stated that the family planning policy must be publicized in sparsely populated areas, except for ethnic minority regions," they wrote. The two writers admitted that in China, ethnic minorities do lead a better life compared to those in Western countries where economic factors dictate every policy.

The last paragraph of the fifth chapter in *Two Innocents in Red China* reads: "People in Quebec will discover in the end that what Ottawa needs to learn from Beijing is more than a lesson."

Why Did China Employed Regional Ethnic Autonomy Rather Than Federalism?

Readers familiar with the history of the Communist Party of China (CPC) may know that the CPC had proposed to establish a federal system of administration in the past. It was put forth at the Second National Congress of the CPC in 1922: "Based on the principle of free federalism, the Federal Republic of China, which includes Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang, will be established." It was also put forth in the Seventh National Congress of the CPC in 1945: "Based on the principle of willingness and democracy, all ethnic groups in China shall establish the Federal Republic of China and organize the central government on the basis of this federal system."

However, when the People's Republic of China was founded, the Chinese government employed ethnic regional autonomy rather than federalism. The CPC proposed to adopt federalism in her early days due to Soviet socialist revolution's great influence on China. After the October Revolution, the Soviet government adopted a federal system to maintain the solidarity and unity of all its ethnic groups which used to be under the rule of the former Tsarist Russia. Following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government's decision to adopt regional ethnic autonomy was based on a more practical understanding and awareness of China's national conditions during the long practice of social revolution.

The CPC had a deeper understanding of ethnic problems during the Long March from 1934 to 1936. Out of the 25,000 *li* (one *li* is equivalent to half a kilometer) covered by the Chinese Red Army, a considerable portion of the distance was

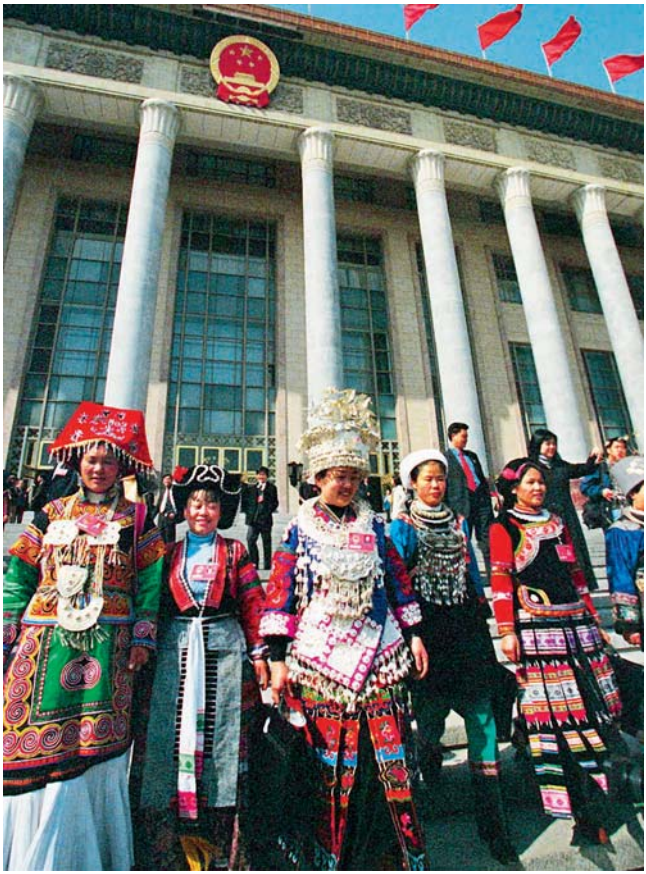
located in ethnic minority regions. According to official statistics, 13 ethnic minorities were scattered around the places that the Chinese Red Army passed—the Miao, Yao, Zhuang, Dong, Bouyei, Tujia, Bai, Naxi, Yi, Qiang, Hui, Tibetan, and Yugur minorities. Because the Chinese Red Army treated ethnic minorities fairly and applied the principle of equality in their relationship, the Chinese Red Army received genuine help from the ethnic minorities during their difficult journey. At the same time, the Chinese Red Army also helped the Yi and Tibetan minorities set up several ethnic minority regimes that were autonomous in nature.

A deeper problem of the ethnic minority debate became rooted during the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression. During her all-around invasion of China, Japan instigated the three northwestern provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia to establish a puppet regime called "*Dahuihuiguo*" (literally Great Hui State) in order to further occupy China's territory. At that time, the CPC, which had set up a regional regime in the northwestern city of Yan'an, initiated timely research into the Mongol and Hui minorities in this region. A group of party members who began working on ethnic affairs had earlier drafted the *Outline of Questions Concerning the Hui Minority* and the *Outline of Questions Concerning the Mongol Minority,* after researching the minorities' history, politics, economy, and culture within a broad and thorough context. The two documents were the start of a series of research work into ethnic minority issues by the CPC. Subsequently in May 1941, the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Regional Government included the policy of ethnic regional autonomy in its newly-issued Administrative Program for that region. The program clearly stated: "Under the principle of equality among ethnic groups, the Mongol, Hui, and Han Chinese ethnic groups have equal political, economic, and cultural rights, and the Mongolian and Hui autonomous regions will be founded."

This was the first attempt by the CPC to resolve domestic ethnic issues through the policy of ethnic regional autonomy.

The regional government also put its Administrative Program into practice. A number of regional and township regimes called the "Hui Autonomous Region" and the "Mongolian Autonomous Region" were set up. These regimes enjoyed the following rights: they could form a local government mainly consisting of their own ethnic representatives by voting; they could establish ethnic minority anti-Japanese military forces with independent rights of military actions; there must be ethnic minority representatives in the regional, county, and township councils; economically, the regional government shall provide funds to assist autonomous regions in production, eliminating all burdens; in terms of culture and education, they could establish cultural agencies for autonomous ethnic groups, public primary schools for the Hui minority and provide free education.

The primary policy of ethnic autonomy included a large number of decrees concerning religious freedom, respect for ethnic folklores, and the use of spoken and written ethnic languages. In order to meet the religious requirements of the Hui people, the regional government carefully chose a site and constructed a mosque. The stone tablet in front of the mosque bore the inscription of the mosque's name written by Chairman Mao, and the inauguration ceremony was conducted in accordance with Muslim rituals and practices. On that day, the Imam in Yan'an hosted a solemn ritual and all Muslims worshipped in the mosque. Important leaders of the CPC such as Zhu De (1886–1976), Xie Juezai (1884–1971), and Li Weihan (1896–1984) also attended the ceremony.



This picture shows the representatives of the ethnic minorities at a National People's Congress.

The Genghis Khan Memorial in Inner Mongolia, where Mongolian descendants gather to pay their respects to their ancestor.

In the 1940s, it became a prevalent practice in Yan'an to respect ethnic history and tradition. By the banks of the Yanshui River, there is a unique building called the Genghis Khan Memorial. This was exclusively constructed for the Mongolians. Annual public memorial ceremonies dedicated to Genghis Khan (1162–1227), their Mongolian ancestor, are held there both in winter and summer. During this period, the most important result after the implementation of ethnic regional autonomy by the CPC was the establishment of the first provincial ethnic autonomous region in 1947; the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Despite many practices of ethnic regional autonomy, at the critical point when the People's Republic of China was founded, leaders of the CPC still raised this question solemnly: "will modern China adopt federalism, or ethnic regional autonomy under the rule of a united republic?" After thorough research, the final conclusion was: China had a different national condition as compared to the Soviet Union, thus should not adopt federalism.

Firstly, the ethnic minority population of Soviet Union accounted for 47% of her total population, which is almost equal to the population of her main ethnic group. However, in China, the total population of ethnic minorities

only accounted for 6% of her total population. Furthermore, historically, the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities had been living together or were living adjacent to their compact communities for a long time, which was completely different from the Soviet Union. Secondly, after the February and October Revolutions, many non-Russian minorities split into different countries, most of which became Soviet states after the civil wars, so the Bolsheviks had to adopt federalism as a transitory model to consolidate all Soviet states for outright unification. However, in China, all ethnic groups teamed up and participated in democratic revolutions against imperialism and dictatorship until the People's Republic was founded on the basis of equality. This was way before China had been a unified country and at a time without any ethnic separation.

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MILESTONES IN CHINA'S ETHNIC REGIONAL AUTONOMY

In February 1952, the first decree on ethnic regional autonomy—*Outline for the Implementation of Ethnic Regional Autonomy in the People's Republic of China* was released. It symbolized that China's ethnic regional autonomy had started its path of recognition under the jurisdiction of law.

In September 1954, ethnic regional autonomy was written into the first Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and "Ethnic Regional Autonomy" was named one of the basic political systems in China.

In May 1984, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy was officially issued and legislated on October 1 in the same year.

In September 1997, at the 15th National Congress of the CPC, ethnic regional autonomy together with the system of National People's Congress; the system of multi-party cooperation; and political consultation led by the CPC formed the three fundamental political systems in China. This further acknowledged the important role that ethnic regional autonomy played in the national political system.

In February 2001, the 12th Session of the Ninth National People's Congress passed the amendments to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy.

Therefore, "the People's Republic of China shall adopt ethnic regional autonomy rather than federalism," which was submitted as a founding program to the First Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) held in September 1949, to be discussed by all her members.

The First CPPCC, which was held before the founding of the People's Republic of China, included discussions of extraordinary significance. At the conference, a series of important issues that the country should follow were discussed and a consensus was reached by representatives elected by all parties, associations, and ethnic groups. Concerning the question of what structure modern China should adopt, representatives at the conference deliberated on the matter through a series of discussions before deciding to establish the People's Republic under a unitary system in China.

"Compact communities of ethnic minorities shall implement ethnic regional autonomy and set up (different) kinds of ethnic autonomous agencies respectively based on their populations and geographical sizes." This was discussed at the Common Program of the CPPCC and was adopted unanimously at the First CPPCC and served as the provisional constitution.

In 1954, ethnic regional autonomy was officially written into the first constitution of the PRC as a basic political system.

Why Do the Chinese People Desire National Unity?

Many years later, some researchers noticed that the regional autonomy of ethnic minorities in a unified country was not a random political choice in a particular time for a particular region. They pointed to the fact that it was inherently determined by Chinese historical and cultural traditions over several millenniums.

In fact, national unity, which is deeply rooted in Chinese historical tradition over several thousands of years, has been the unceasing common inspiration among the Chinese people. Since the Qin and Han dynasties, there had been confrontations and disputes among different ethnic groups, and periods of separation and disunion, but national unity was still the mainstream of historical development. Integrated in a unified nation, different ethnic groups developed close relationships of interdependence through political, economic, and cultural communications. Moreover, a strong sense of national solidarity and common pursuit of national unity flourished. In modern times, to fight against imperialism, all the ethnic groups experienced failures and successes together, thus fostering an inseparable relationship on the basis of existing cooperation. Furthermore, safeguarding the unity of the nation has since become an irreversible historical trend.

Urumqi is the capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Ancient Chinese history taught us that national prosperity comes naturally with national unity. During her strongest periods of Han, Tang, and Qing dynasties, national strength was always coupled with national unity. With such a national historical backdrop, national unity has become the ultimate pursuit of all the ethnic groups.

An intriguing phenomenon is that in spite of huge cultural gaps among different ethnic groups, China stands as a single sovereignty in modern world history. The coexistence of diversity and consistency of Chinese culture is not dependent upon human factors. Instead, it is both a result of the choices made in Chinese history and decisions made during the long period of accumulation of Chinese culture.

Ethnic Autonomous Areas in China

In early 1952, Chairman Mao sent a message to Seypidin Azizi (1915–2003) who was far away in Xinjiang. It said: "Please offer your detailed proposal on the issue of regional autonomy of Xinjiang."

In Azizi's report, he wrote his ideas on the main tasks and constituents of the Xinjiang autonomous government. In particular, he suggested that

Yinchuan is the capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

the name of the future government be called Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Government.

On October 1, 1955, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established. Azizi was elected the Chairman of the People's Committee and Secretary of Party Committee of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Xinjiang is the first provincial autonomous region after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. In the next decade, three more autonomous regions were created: Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on March 5, 1958, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region on October 25, 1958, and the Tibet Autonomous Region on September 9, 1965.

Together with Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region founded in 1947 (before the founding of the People's Republic of China), there were five provincial autonomous regions in China. The hierarchy of these autonomous regions was arranged in the manner of a three-step stairway: autonomous region; autonomous prefecture; and autonomous county.

The first autonomous prefecture founded by the People's Republic of China was the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Garze, which Sichuan established in November 1950. The Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei was established in December 1983, and is the youngest prefecture in the country. Currently, the country has 30 autonomous prefectures.

In May 1950, the first autonomous county—the Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province was founded. Meanwhile, the Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County in Mianyang, Sichuan declared her establishment in July 2003, becoming the youngest autonomous county in China. Currently, there are 120 autonomous counties in China.

From an objective point of view, the autonomous areas fall into the following categories:

(1) Autonomous areas are established in places where one ethnic minority lives in a compact community, such as the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

(2) Autonomous areas are established in places where two ethnic minorities live in compact communities, such as in Hunan's Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture.
(3) Autonomous areas are established in places where several ethnic minorities live in compact communities, such as the Jishishan Bao'an, Dongxian and Salar Autonomous County in Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province.
(4) Autonomous areas are established within a larger autonomous area where people from an ethnic minority with a smaller population live in compact communities, such as the Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; and the Qabqal Xibo Autonomous County in Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture.
(5) Autonomous areas established for one ethnic minority which lives in compact communities in different places, such as the Hui minority in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province, and Dachang Hui Autonomous County in Hebei Province. Another example is the Miao minority, which establishes or co-establishes 13 autonomous counties and six prefectures around the country.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS IN CHINA

1. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

A total of 49 ethnic groups live on a land area of 1.183 million square kilometers. The region boasts a population of 23.9235 million (as of 2006), among which 4.2338 million are Mongolians. Three autonomous counties in this region are: Oroqen Autonomous County, Ewenke Autonomous County, and Morin Dawa Daur Autonomous County.

2. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

It covers an area of 16,649 square kilometers inhabited by 47 ethnic groups, among which 13 are natives. In 2006, it had a population of 20.5 million with 60.4% comprising ethnic minorities. It includes five autonomous prefectures, six autonomous counties and 43 ethnic townships.

3. Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

It covers an area of 236,700 square kilometers that is populated by the greatest number of ethnic groups, including a dozen native ethnic groups. Home to the largest proportion of the Yao and Mulam minorities, it is also the only region where the Jing minority lives.

4. Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region

It covers an area of 51,800 square kilometers inhabited by 35 ethnic groups. Among a population of 6.12 million people, 1.8625 million are from the Hui minority, accounting for 18.9% of all the Hui people in China (as of 2007). Two-thirds of the population in Ningxia is made up of the Han Chinese—the native inhabitants since ancient times.

5. Tibet Autonomous Region

It covers an area of 1.20223 million square kilometers with a population of 2.81 million and a density of 2.21 people per square kilometers (as of 2006). Most of the population lives in the southern and eastern parts of the region. With the Tibetan minority as the largest group, Tibet is also the only region where the Monba and Lhoba minorities have settled.

Today in China, 44 out of 55 ethnic minorities have established autonomous areas. The population in autonomous areas account for 71% of the entire population of all ethnic minorities.

The ethnic township is another administrative organization with Chinese characteristics. As a supplement to autonomous areas, ethnic townships are established in places where ethnic minorities live in compact communities, and autonomous governments are not established because the areas and populations of the ethnic minorities are too small.

According to the Regulations on the Administrative Work of Ethnic Townships, the heads of the ethnic townships should be citizens from the ethnic minorities exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned, and the appointment of other members of the people's governments of these townships should include a significant proportion of the seats for members of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy.

In all, China has nine ethnic townships in places where autonomous governments cannot be established because the areas and populations of the ethnic minorities are too small. There are currently 1,100 ethnic townships in the country.

Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy: A Brief Summary

This law includes seven chapters and 74 articles. Its main principle refers to the autonomous rights of the autonomous areas, which is summarized as follows:

Organs of Autonomous Governments in Autonomous Areas

The organs of autonomous governments in autonomous areas are the people's congresses and people's governments of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures, and autonomous counties. The organs of autonomous governments in autonomous areas will follow the system of the National People's Congress.

The people's governments of autonomous areas shall implement the system that gives overall responsibility to the chairman of an autonomous region, the governor of an autonomous prefecture, and the head of an autonomous county, who shall direct the work of the people's governments at their respective levels.

This picture, taken on December 11, 2008, shows the 50th anniversary celebration of the establishment of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

The chairman of an autonomous region, the governor of an autonomous prefecture, and the head of an autonomous county shall be a member of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned.

Among the chairmen or vice-chairmen of the standing committee of the people's congress of an autonomous area, there shall be one or more members from the ethnic group or groups exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned.

In the people's congress of an autonomous region, autonomous prefecture or autonomous county, in addition to the representatives of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy in the administrative area, other ethnic groups inhabiting the area are also entitled to proportional representation. Ethnic minorities with small populations will enjoy favorable policies in terms of the number and proportion of representatives.

The cadres in regional autonomous governments as well as their subsidiary departments shall, whenever possible, include members from the ethnic minority group exercising regional autonomy in the area. Priority should be given to ethnic minority cadres who meet the basic requirements.

In autonomous areas where the populations of ethnic minorities reach or exceed half of the entire local population, the number of cadres shall be kept to an appropriate proportion; in autonomous areas where populations of ethnic minorities are less than half of the entire local population, there should be a higher proportion of cadres from ethnic minorities.

Power of Autonomous Governments in Ethnic Autonomous Areas

Legislative power The people's congresses in autonomous areas have the right to formulate autonomous regulations and other separate regulations in light of the special political, economic, and cultural conditions of the ethnic group in that autonomous area. Autonomous regulations stipulate basic issues on regional autonomy; while separate regulations should deal mainly with issues on regional autonomy in a specific field. Autonomous regulations and separate regulations may contain provisions which have been properly altered on the basis of existing laws or administrative regulations.

Flexible enforcement If a resolution, decision, an order or instruction of a state organ at a higher level does not suit the conditions in a national autonomous area, the organ of an autonomous government in the area may either implement certain modifications or cease implementation after having reported to and received the approval of the state organs at a higher level.

Independent economic development Autonomous organs in autonomous areas shall enjoy more independence in finance and economic matters, as well as

preferential treatment by the state. They can also designate ports for foreign trade after obtaining approval from the State Council.

Autonomy in administering finance All revenues accruing to the ethnic autonomous area shall be managed and used by the organs of autonomous governments. If the expenditures of an ethnic autonomous area exceed its revenues, subsidies shall be granted by the finance department at a higher level. All ethnic autonomous areas enjoy different kinds of special subsidies and provisional allowances granted by the state. While implementing tax laws of the state, the organs of autonomous governments in ethnic autonomous areas may grant tax exemptions or reductions for certain items that should be encouraged or given preferential consideration in taxation, except for items on which tax reduction or exemption require examination and approval by the state.

Autonomy in culture, spoken and written languages The organs of autonomous governments in ethnic autonomous areas shall enjoy certain cultural autonomy. This ensures the freedom of using and developing the spoken and written languages of every ethnic group in the concerned areas. While performing its functions, the organ of the autonomous government in an ethnic autonomous area shall, in accordance with the regulations on the exercise of autonomy of the area, use one or several commonly used languages in the locality. When several common languages are used for the performance of such functions, the language of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy may be used as the main language.

Autonomy in the set-up of local public security forces The organs of autonomous governments in autonomous areas may, in accordance with the military system of the state and practical local needs, organize local public security forces to maintain public order after getting the State Council's approval.

Independent development of science and technology, education, and culture The organs of autonomous governments in ethnic autonomous areas have the right to make plans for educational development in these areas: to open various kinds of schools and determine their educational plans, systems, forms, curricula, languages used for teaching, and enrollment procedures. The organs of autonomous governments in ethnic autonomous areas shall independently develop literature, art, print publishing, films, radio, television, and other ethnic cultural undertakings both in the forms and with characteristics unique to these ethnic minorities. They shall further decide on plans for the development of science and technology and make independent decisions on plans for developing local medical and health care services. They shall also make their own decisions when it comes to the development of traditional ethnic sports activities, and shall protect local scenic spots, historical sites, and precious cultural relics.

Power of Autonomous Government Organs: The Tibet Case Study

In accordance with the Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy, Tibet enjoys regional autonomy including legislative power. Meanwhile, Tibet Autonomous Region is allowed to make flexible modifications when implementing existing laws or administrative regulations in light of local conditions.

Since its establishment, Tibet Autonomous Region has formulated over 150 regulations, resolutions, decisions, and orders on the basis of historical, cultural, and natural features of Tibetan heritage.

Some examples are the autonomous area's designated holidays, which include the Tibetan New Year, the *Shoton* (Yogurt) Festival and other traditional Tibetan festivals that are official regional holidays. In addition, in consideration of the unique natural and geographical features of Tibet, Tibet Autonomous Region has fixed the work week at 35 hours, five hours fewer than the national statutory work week.

These stipulations and rules of Tibet Autonomous Region clarify that:

(1) The Tibetan language shall be the lingua franca of Tibet;
(2) Although equal emphasis is to be paid to the Tibetan and Chinese languages, the Tibetan language shall be the main language used;
(3) All the resolutions and regulations by the people's congresses at various levels in Tibet, formal documents and public announcements of the governments at all levels in Tibet Autonomous Region have to be printed in both Tibetan and Chinese.
(4) All newspapers, radios, and television programs in Tibet need to include both Tibetan and Chinese languages for their news and broadcasts.
(5) All signs and logos for government agencies, roads, traffic sign posts, and public facilities should be written in both Tibetan and Chinese languages.
(6) In judicial lawsuits whereby Tibetans are involved, the Tibetan language is used both in the trial and in the writing of legal documents.

In Tibetan culture, there is a tradition of polyandrous and polygamous marriages. In 1981, the Tibet Autonomous Region adopted the "Accommodation Rules for the Implementation of the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China," which stipulates that polyandrous and polygamous marriages formed before the promulgation of the "Accommodation Rules" shall be valid if none of the people involved takes the initiative to terminate the marriage. In accordance with the "Accommodation Rules," those who continue with the tradition of

A flag-raising ceremony in Potala Palace Square in Lhasa, Tibet.

polyandrous and polygamous marriages will be persuaded to practice monogamy while penalties related to bigamy will not be imposed on the parties.

The "Accommodation Rules" also lower the statutory age of marriage by two years as provided by the Marriage Law according to Tibetan tradition. In Tibet, only males above 20 years old and females above 18 can legally wed.

Amendments to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy

China's market economy was initiated in the 1980s, and matured quickly in the 1990s. With such rapid economic development, amendments to the former Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy were inevitably needed.

Calls for its revision revolved around the economic regulations stipulated under the planned economy. Meanwhile, faced with the waves of reform and

opening up, driven by the unprecedented aspiration for economic progress in the ethnic autonomous areas, ethnic minorities urgently demanded that the law represent their wishes for economic growth.

The 1990s witnessed the start of the amendment process, and after nearly a decade of research and investigation, the revised Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy was finally promulgated in 2001.

A major change lies in the emphasis on the central government's responsibility to help ethnic minorities with local economic growth. The revised version clearly stipulates that developed areas should offer assistance to ethnic autonomous areas. Among the 31 amended articles, 23 revolved around the topics of social and economic development.

For example, the newly-added Article 56 stipulates: "the state shall, in accordance with unified planning and market demand, give top priority to ethnic autonomous areas when making rational arrangements for resource development projects and infrastructure projects." Meanwhile, Article 57 stipulates: "the state shall, taking into account the characteristics and needs of economic development in ethnic autonomous areas, make comprehensive use of the monetary market and the capital market to increase its monetary support to the areas." Finally, Article 69 stipulates: "the state and the people's governments at

This picture shows the celebrations of Naadam, a traditional Mongolian festival in Inner Mongolia.

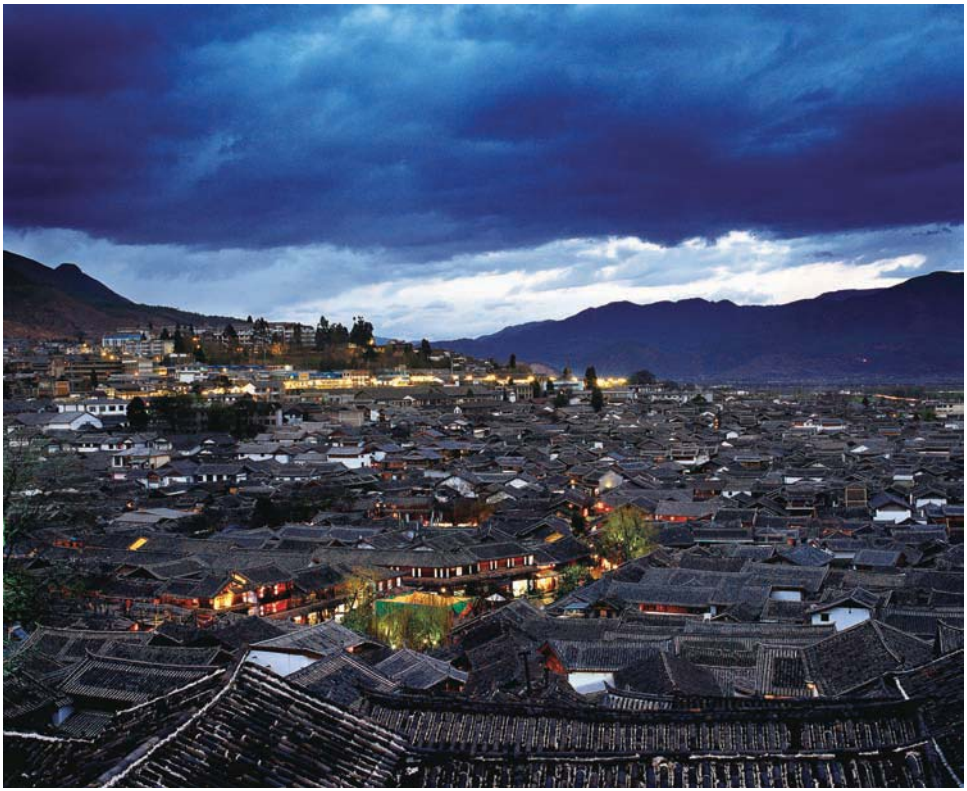
higher levels shall provide better support for the poverty-stricken areas in ethnic autonomous regions in financing, raw materials, technology and trained personnel so as to help the poor populations in the concerned areas escape poverty and reach their full potential sooner."

The amendments also added that the state shall give economic compensations to ethnic autonomous regions that produce natural resources.

A Unique "Chinese Model"

The international community employs the term "Chinese model" to describe China's practice of using ethnic regional autonomy to solve ethnic issues. Since the second half of the twentieth century, against the backdrop of worldwide ethnic confrontations, China's regional ethnic autonomy has validated her special value in social harmony. As a unique "Chinese Model," it has attracted increasing attention from the international community.

Many foreign scholars and politicians have stated that China's ethnic regional autonomy not only shows the common agreement of protecting the interests of minorities, but also puts this into practice. China's experiences proved her solutions to ethnic issues for other countries, and cast new light on the use of political activities in solving ethnic issues, providing an enormous contribution to the arena of international politics.



Chapter 5

Protection and Development of China's Ethnic Minority Culture

Cultural Self-Identity, Cultural Tolerance, Cultural Coexistence, and Common Prosperity

In December 1990, Japanese sociologists organized the International Conference of East Asian Studies in Tokyo to celebrate the 80th birthday of Fei Xiaotong. In his keynote speech, "Research on Humans in China: Personal Experiences," Fei proposed concepts such as "cultural self-identity, cultural tolerance, cultural coexistence, and common prosperity."

It is not easy to translate his original Chinese phrases to another language because of its phonological and grammatical beauty, which can only be appreciated by speakers of the Chinese language. However, the world should know its connotation.

"Cultural self-identity" indicates cultural self-acknowledgement: each culture has its own values, and should be acknowledged respectfully by another culture.

"Cultural tolerance" refers to the attitude toward a foreign culture: when faced with a foreign or exotic culture, each culture should be tolerant of each other's cultural differences, and appreciate their beauty.

"Cultural coexistence and common prosperity" suggests the connection between various cultures, that is, to respect and coexist with one another in harmony despite having different values. Differences in harmony will bring vitality, and that diversity coexists with order, where unity is the ideal state of all societies.

A Tibetan opera performance.

Farmers' music and dance festival of the Korean minority in China.

"Cultural coexistence" originates from the traditional Chinese philosophy of "Harmony in Diversity." This great thought is also a conclusion of long-term studies on ethnic relations by Fei Xiaotong. It is the golden rule of cultural coexistence. Likewise, it is also the best principle for the harmonious interaction of civilizations.

"56 Ethnic Groups, 56 Flowers"

The late Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau believed that the Chinese government holds a "cautious respect" in ethnic issues. Behind this lies the principle that "ethnic groups are all equal regardless of their size," which is the basic attitude of the Chinese government toward the culture of ethnic minorities.

In the well-known Chinese song, *56 Ethnic Groups, 56 Flowers,* all 56 ethnic groups in China are described as 56 flowers. If we compare flowers to ethnic culture, the song has a deeper meaning. In China, people tend to use the poetic phrase "let a hundred flowers bloom" to refer to the harmonious coexistence of diverse elements or members.

Liang Tingwang, who put forward the theory of "cultural plates," holds that: Chinese culture is made up of four "plates"—agricultural civilization in the Central Plains; nomadic culture in the northern grasslands; agricultural and nomadic culture in southwestern China; and rice cultivation culture in southern China. The rich culture of the 56 ethnic groups can be superimposed upon the above-mentioned four plates.

However, it is not enough to just get mere general descriptions of the cultural diversity of ethnic minorities. The variety and diversity of these ethnic minorities can be gleaned from the following detailed analysis.

Cultural Diversity in China's Ethnic Minorities

Epics of Ethnic Minorities

German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) once asserted in *Aesthetics* that China had no epics. But he was wrong. China not only has epics but also owns the longest epic in the world.

The Tibetan epic, *The Epic of King Gesar* (or *Gesar* in short), is a living epic and is growing longer in the performance, dialogue and songs of folk artists. Dating back to 1,000 years ago, *Gesar* is the collective wisdom of all Tibetans. It has over 120 volumes, that is, one million lines or 20 million words, longer than all the combined five famous epics in the world. They are the ancient

The Dai minority celebrating the Water-Splashing Festival.

Babylonian *Gelgamesh, Iliad* and *Odyssey* of ancient Greece, and *Ramayana* and *Mahabarata* of ancient India. *Gesar* depicts the general picture of society and history, religious beliefs, communications between different ethnic groups, social morality, and folk customs. It is considered an ancient encyclopedia by Tibetans in the past.

For thousands of years, *Gesar* had been passed on by peasants and herdsmen living in remote areas. How could they recite thousands of lines? How did they learn to sing? How did they memorize the words? No scholars can answer these questions and hence they have been tagged as the "Riddles of the Sphinx" in *Gesar* studies till today.

Among the folk artists, old Zhaba is a legend. He created 25 volumes of *Gesar,* which contain 600,000 lines or six million words. What does such a

large number indicate? It is 25 times as long as the Homeric epics of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The *Epic of Manas* of the Kirgiz minority is another living epic. It tells the story of how great leaders in eight generations of the Manas family led the people of Kirgiz to fight against foreign oppression. The folk epic, which originated between the ninth and 10th centuries, is over 210,000 lines long, with tens of thousands of people participating in its composition. Because of its reputation in international literary history, the United Nations (UN) once designated the year 1995 as the "International Manas Year."

Gesar, Manas, and the Mongol minority's *Djangar* constitute the three heroic epics of China. Named after the legendary hero Djangar, it has 60 volumes, or more than 100,000 lines.

Kirgiz herdsmen singing the national epic—*Manas.*

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, researchers on ethnic minority literature collected and discovered about 100 heroic and immigrant epics among 30 ethnic minorities in southern China, including the Yi, Miao, Zhuang, and Dai minorities.

The epics vividly conjure pictures of the creation of the universe, the origins of human life, floods and calamities, tribal wars and campaigns as well as constant migrations of ancient people. The images and modalities of narration employed by the epics find their marks in later literature, making them an essential part of the culture of ethnic minorities.

Music of Ethnic Minorities

One common element that all 55 ethnic minorities shared is the love for music. Almost every ethnic minority appreciates music, and each has its own musical tradition with unique features.

The Dong minority, mainly living in Guizhou, boasts a special attitude toward music. For them, songs are synonymous to knowledge, the more songs one knows, the more knowledgeable he or she is. Master singers are the most respected people in the Dong minority. In traditional Dong society, people communicate with songs: they sing at work, they sing while resting, they sing

A performance of the Naxi music from Lijiang, Yunnan, which is also widely known as a "cultural relic" of Chinese music.

during courtship, and they even establish cooperation among villages through songfests.

Their idea about music is a typical example of the musical philosophy that all ethnic minorities share. In addition, they have also created a marvel in the ethnic musical community. The *Dong Grand Song* is a polyphonic chorus sang by three or more people. As a type of folk music, experts think that the structure of the *Dong Grand Song* is more complicated than the others. Without conductors and accompaniments, it is quite amazing for ordinary Dong people to give stunning performances of such complicated polyphonic choruses.

For a long time, the world music community held the stereotype that polyphony only exists in the West and that China has no multi-vocal harmony. The choruses composed by the Dong minority, which they performed in France in 1986 stirred the international music community, who claimed it was an extraordinary discovery in Chinese music history.

The *Dong Grand Song* represents the ethnic music in southern China, and typical northern ethnic musical works are the *12 Mukam* by the Uygur minority and the Mongolian long-tune folk songs.

We seldom find music that can be compared with the *12 Mukam*. Comprising 360 pieces of vocal and instrumental music, and combining the works

The Dong people performing the *Dong Grand Song.*

of 44 classic poems and numerous folk songs, the *12 Mukam* includes 4,492 lines and takes 24 hours of singing to complete it.

Mukam is a form of folk music which has also spread to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. However, Uygur Mukam dwarfs them all with its large scale, complete structure, diverse forms, and distinctive features. In 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed Uygur Mukam among the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The beauty of the Mongolian long-tune folk songs is beyond description. Accompanied by the *morin khuur* (a "horse-head" fiddle), the rhythm lingers, and it is solemn, stirring, and heartwarming. The innate beauty of it lies in its ability to "stretch time and space," as if time has stood still, using only human voices.

The themes of the Mongolian long-tune folk songs are mostly related to: the vastness of the grasslands, the eternity of nature, the lapse of time, the brevity of human life, and uncertainty of destiny. Like the shepherd on the grasslands, the singers cajole our souls to return to nature.

The Xinjiang Uygurs performing the *12 Mukam*.

The most distinctive singing technique is an overtone singing style called *nugola* which has a vocal texture ranging from silky smooth to vibrant beats of horses galloping. All these subtle changes cannot be annotated in the scores. In 2004, UNESCO included Mongolian long-tune folk songs as the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Traditional Medicine of Ethnic Minorities

There are many stories proving the glorious history of traditional ethnic medicine. The following legend is a case in point:

> In order to test the nine court physicians whom he spent a lot of money employing, King Trisong Deutsen (742–797) pretended to be ill and stayed in his palace. Then, he issued a strange edict: "Since you are all famous physicians, feeling my pulse is too easy a job for you. I would like you to read my pulse by feeling the thread tied to my wrist instead."
>
> Then, the king ordered his assistants to tie threads to the paws of several cats and handed them over to the court physicians. They were confused by the pulse rate felt through the threads. They wondered whether the king was fatally ill or if there was something wrong with their medical skills. With a light touch, the pulse felt very weak and slow, but with a stronger touch, it felt swifter, which resembled the pulse pattern of cats. Afterward, the king ordered his assistants to tie threads to the claws of chicken

> and handed them over to the court physicians. After a while, they came to a conclusion that the pulse vibrated on a light touch, and felt very hard on a stronger touch, which resembled the pulse pattern of chickens. Finally, the king asked his assistants to tie the thread to a stone mill. This time, the pulse was very deep and the physicians decided it was similar to rocks…

After Sontzen Gampo [569(617?)–650] unified Tibet, the sphygmology of traditional Chinese medicine was introduced into Tibet. Tibetan physicians developed their own pulse-taking methods by learning from traditional Chinese medicine and Indian Ayurvedic medicine. The above-mentioned legend indicates the mysterious origin of Tibetan pulse-taking methods.

The *Four Medical Tantras* is the best proof of the extensiveness and profoundness of Tibetan medicine. The medical classic contains 156 chapters and 240,000 words. It is the height of achievement of Tibetan medicine. Every experienced Tibetan doctor and student of the Tibetan Traditional Medical College starts his or her medical journey with the *Four Medical Tantras.*

Tibetan medicine is a typical example of ethnic medicine. Surveys over the past 30 years showed that among the 55 ethnic minorities, about 20 have their

A Tibetan doctor diagnoses a patient's illness by feeling his pulse and observing his tongue.

A hospital built for the Dai ethnic group in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan.

own independent medical practices. Also, almost each ethnic group has their own health care experiences.

Some ethnic groups set up independent medical theoretical systems, creating many complete classics of traditional medicine, such as the medicines of Tibetan, Mongolian, Uygur, Korean, Dai, Yi, and Hui minorities. Although some ethnic minorities do not have their own written languages, they still have mature and original medical experiences and theories. In recent years, under the support of the government, these ethnic minorities sorted out a set of medical theories passed down orally and had them systematically organized. Ethnic groups such as the Zhuang, Yao, Dong, and Tujia minorities, compiled and published their own medical works.

In June 2009, the first nationwide assessment of 30 masters of traditional Chinese medicine was conducted. Two masters were from ethnic medical systems—Chadrel Rinpoche from the Tibetan Hospital in Tibet Autonomous Region and Ce Surongzhabu from the Inner Mongolia Medical College.

So far, there are nearly 200 ethnic hospitals financed by the central and local governments, and more ethnic specialist clinics have been opened in many areas. Fourteen educational organizations offer ethnic medical courses to train professionals in ethnic medicine. Ethnic medicine examinations of the Tibetan, Mongolian, Uygur, Dai, Korean, and Zhuang minorities have been

included in the National Qualification Examination for Doctors. The number of ethnic medical experts has reached over 10,000.

Festivals of Ethnic Minorities

Festivals of Ethnic Minorities in China, published in 1993, reveals a stunning number—from ancient times till 1993, 56 ethnic groups celebrate 1,700 festivals. Among them are about 500 traditional festivals of the Han Chinese and the remaining 1,200 belong to ethnic minorities.

China has a variety of festivals, and those celebrated by the ethnic minorities are especially colorful. They fall into the following groups:

- Festivals relevant to the calendar, season, and phenology. These include Broad Season of the Lisu minority, Kaquewa Festival of the Derung minority, Duan Festival of the Sui minority, Noroz Festival of the Kazak minority, and Anie Festival of the Daur minority.
- Festivals about agricultural activities, such as Heaven's Gift Day of the Manchu minority, Bai minority's Rice-transplanting Festival, and Hani minority's New Rice Festival.
- Festivals related to rites and sacrifices, such as tributes to Supo by the Mongolians, tribute to gods by the Tujia minority, tribute to Obo by the Yugur minority, ceremonies to worship ancestors by the Yi minority, God of Mountain Festival by the Qiang minority, and ceremonies to welcome ancestors by the She minority.
- Festivals that are related to religious beliefs, including the Tibetan Shai Fo Festival, Open-door Day and Closed-door Day of the Dai minority, Festival of Walking around "Three Holy Temples" of the Bai minority, Gu Zang Festival of the Miao minority, Pan Wang Festival of the Yao minority, Sama Festival of the Dong minority, Hajie Festival of the Jing minority, and Yi Fan Festival of the Mulam minority.
- Festivals in memory of heroes and historical events, such as Lin Wang Festival of the Dong minority, Danu festival of the Yao minority, and Alu Woluo Festival of the Achang minority.
- Festivals for socialization and recreation, such as the Folk Song Fair of the Zhuang minority, Mongolian Nadam Fair, Moqing Festival of the Daur minority, and March Street of the Bai minority.

Without festivals, there are no cultural integration, communication, and succession between ethnic minorities. A survey shows that in Guizhou, about 40% of the population is made up of ethnic minorities and there are more than 365 ethnic festivals. That is to say, in Guizhou, almost every day is a celebration.

The annual Festival for the Elderly celebrated by the Korean minority in China.

Miao women attending the Sister Festival in the mountainous areas of Guizhou.

Practices to Protect and Promote China's Ethnic Minority Cultures

The destiny of a nation depends on the destiny of her culture, as culture is the soul that constitutes the existence of a nation. Therefore, how a government determines the destiny of an ethnic minority largely depends on what policy it adopts for the ethnic minority's culture.

China has many unique practices in protecting and promoting the cultures of ethnic minorities.

Spoken and Written Languages

"The government shall help create or improve written languages of the ethnic minorities with no written languages of their own, or with incomplete written languages." This was a resolution proposed in 1951, and in February of the same year, the State Council made six resolutions after hearing the report of the Visiting Delegation of the Central Ensemble of Ethnic Groups. "Help ethnic minorities create and reform their written languages" was the fifth resolution.

In fact, extensive research has already been conducted on the languages of ethnic minorities in China. Luo Changpei (1899–1958), a Manchu linguist, organized surveys on ethnic minority languages around China shortly after he was assigned to set up the Institute of Linguistics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1950.

In June 1951, a brand new discipline in China's higher education history, namely ethnic minority languages and literature, was born in the Central Academy of National Minorities (now known as the Minzu University of China). At almost the same time, the Advisory Committee of National Language Research was founded in Beijing, many of whose members are ethnic minority linguistic experts. One important job this committee did was to draft the "Report on Helping to Create Written Languages for Ethnic Minorities without Written Languages." The report proposed that ethnic minorities who have their own spoken languages but no written languages or no commonly used written languages seek help from the committee to create a pseudo-alphabetic script using Chinese phonetics or to let the committee choose one from the present applicable written languages after extensive research.

In 1956, another larger census on ethnic minority languages was carried out under the direct leadership of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission. Seven teams of over 700 linguists visited ethnic minority regions. This was the largest census on ethnic minority languages.

The census lasted for more than two years. As a result, nearly 40 languages were presented in their phonological systems, vocabularies, and grammatical structures, providing a scientific foundation for the upcoming creation of written languages.

The Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Sciences and State Ethnic Affairs Commission decided to choose one ethnic group for a prototype creation of written languages. That group was the Zhuang minority. In December 1957, Premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) presided over the 63rd Plenary Meeting of the State Council, and the agenda was to discuss and approve the proposal on the Zhuang's written language.

At the same time, the core program for the creation and reform of written languages—Principles of Designing Letters for Ethnic Minority Written Languages—was finally unveiled. It went through several rounds of discussions before the program was officially formulated.

The design was carried out under very cautious principles, as it not only concerned political equality, but was also a scientific issue—did the newly-created language adhere to the rules of ethnic minority speeches? Did it respect the will, feelings, and habits of the users? And lastly, the design would affect whether the newly-created language would be accepted and used by the ethnic minorities.

After the Zhuang written language was created, 14 language programs for another nine ethnic groups were launched one after another, which included the Buyi, Miao, Yi, Li, Naxi, Lisu, Hani, Wa, and Dong ethnic minorities. New programs for the Tu minority in Qinghai, Tao minority in Guangdong, and Bai minority in Yunnan were formulated in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

To improve and reform the existing written languages for some ethnic minorities was another important task. In the 1950s, the government helped the Lahu and Jingpo minorities design reform programs for their written languages and helped the Dai minority design four programs to improve the Dai language.

The creation and reform programs of written languages involved over 20 million people of the ethnic minorities.

The newly-created and improved languages have been under careful experimentation and testing. So far, all the written languages are being experimentally practiced except for the Zhuang language and standard Yi language in Sichuan, which have been approved by the State Council and officially put into use.

In June 1991, when approving the notice on the "Report on Strengthening the Work on Ethnic Minority Languages from the State Ethnic Affairs Commission," the State Council pointed out that "for written languages created or improved in the 1950s, those welcomed by the majority shall be reported for approval and implementation; those that did not achieve ideal results shall be further improved; and those that did not gain a good response from the majority shall not be implemented." This instruction fully indicated the complexity of the creation and reform of ethnic minority written languages.

Language equality has always served as an important symbol of China's ethnic policy. It is a belief of China's ethnic policy that there is no ethnic equality without language equality. In the National People's Congress (NPC) of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), translation and simultaneous interpretation in seven ethnic minority languages are provided for representatives and committee members of ethnic minorities, including the Mongol, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazak, Korean, Zhuang, and Yi minorities.

In the late twentieth century, successive breakthroughs were made in China's ethnic minority language information processing system and electronic publishing system. Tibetan was China's first ethnic minority language with an international standard. In 1984, when DOS was the dominant computer operating systems, Northwest University for Nationalities began research on the "Tibetan Language Information Processing System." In 1997, when the United Kingdom, the United States, India, and other countries all proposed programs for the Tibetan language code, the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) voted to approve the international standard code of Tibetan language upon China's proposal. At the beginning of 1999, researchers in Zhongguancun completed the first Tibetan computer operating system, which was the first Tibetan language processing program, and the world's first Tibetan website after a year of hard work.

In fact, the information processing for the Tibetan language has achieved the same level as that for the language of the Han Chinese. Currently, with the promotion efforts by the Chinese government, information processing and electronic publishing has become a reality for the written languages of 11 ethnic minorities, including Tibetan, Mongolian, Uygur, Kazakh, Kirgiz, Korean, Yi, Zhuang, Dai, Xibo, and Manchu.

In the twenty-first century, cell phones in ethnic minority languages began to appear. The first ethnic minority language cell phone in Uygur appeared in January 2004. The menu used the Uygur language and allowed users to enter Uygur script to send short messages. Soon after, cell phones in Mongolian, Tibetan, Yi, and other ethnic minority languages appeared one after another. In November 2007, a multimedia news platform for cell phones in Tibetan language was launched in Gansu Province, the first ever ethnic minority newspaper for cell phones in China.

Press and Publications of Ethnic Minorities

The Ethnic Press of China, established in 1953, is an unusual press. Its name was inscribed by then-Premier Zhou Enlai, and its president and editor-in-chief was Sa Kongliao who was also the Deputy Head of the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP).

The Ethnic Press of China worked with some professional publishing houses soon after its founding, and published comic strips and maps in ethnic minority languages, Uygur classical music *12 Mukam,* and other ethnic minorities' books, filling a series of gaps in the history of China's ethnic minorities' publications.

The Ethnic Press of China also founded the *Nationality Pictorial* magazine in 1955 and its name was once again inscribed by Premier Zhou. It soon became one of the three most famous pictorials in China. The *National Unity* magazine began publishing in 1957 and it was an exclusive magazine for ethnic minorities. After the 1980s, the *National Pictorial* and *National Unity* were published in five ethnic minority languages, including Tibetan, Uygur, Mongolian, Kazakh, and Korean.

In 1951, Xinjiang People's Publishing House and Mongolian People's Publishing House were established. The following year, Guangxi People's Publishing House was set up. In 1959, Ningxia People's Publishing House was founded. Twelve years later, Tibetan People's Publishing House was established. All these companies publish various books in their local ethnic minority and Chinese languages.

Meanwhile, in some provinces with multiple ethnic groups, compilation and translation bureaus for respective languages were gradually set up. Some autonomous regions also established publishing houses, mostly focusing on books in ethnic minority languages or having exclusive compilation and translation offices.

In the 1950s, provincial newspapers were published in succession in the five autonomous regions, among which the *Guangxi Daily* and *Ningxia Daily* were published in Chinese, while the other three were published both in the local ethnic minority language and Chinese.

In the twenty-first century, China's news publishing faced massive reforms and changes—the marketization and commercialization of publishing. However, according to the plan of the State Press and Publications Administration, publication in ethnic minority languages is defined as "publication for public welfare." In other words, to ensure that the publication of ethnic minority languages may not be affected adversely by commercialization, all the ethnic minority language publication houses in China are entitled to publication subsidies from the government's financial expenditure.

Regardless of past or present situations, very few countries in the world can be compared to China with respect to the operation, scale, and investment of news publishing houses and their range of publications.

Folk Arts

Jiangbianjiacuo, a Tibetan, was born in Batang County, Sichuan Province. He was an interpreter for the 14th Dalai Lama and the 10th Panchen Lama in the

early years after the founding of the People's Republic of China. In 1981, he left his translation and editing career to research on *Gesar.*

From 1983, after the government formulated the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1981–1985), Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986–1990), and Eighth Five-Year Plan (1991–1995), the collection and research on *Gesar* was listed three times as a national key scientific research project. Jiangbianjiacuo was in charge of this project. During the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996–2000), he finally began work on the compilation and publication of a concise edition of *Gesar.* The concise edition consists of 40 volumes, each containing 400,000 words, totaling 16 million words, which was a mammoth cultural project.

The Chinese government sent research teams comprising hundreds of scholars and scientists to Tibet to conduct surveys on *Gesar.* The survey started from the 1950s and is still ongoing until today. "The research and sorting tasks were the largest- and longest-ever in Tibetan cultural history that involved a great number of people, achieved the greatest success and had the most extensive impact. It was an unprecedented feat in history," wrote Jiangbianjiacuo in his memoirs.

For the research and publication of *Gesar,* another great achievement was that the Tibetan version of *Gesar* had been officially published in nearly 100 volumes after the founding of the People's Republic of China, with a total of

Tibetan folk artists singing the Tibetan epic *Gesar,* accompanied by musical instruments.

nearly four million copies sold. This meant that each Tibetan adult would have owned more than one copy of *Gesar* based on the population in Tibet Autonomous Region. So far, *Gesar* has become one of the most dynamic fields of research in China's folk literature.

In Uygur culture, the *12 Mukam* opera can be considered a treasure. However, due to the disruption of wars and social unrest, very few artists could perform the whole opera. Tu'erdiahong was the last and only master who could sing the full opera in the 1950s.

In 1950, the Chinese Ministry of Culture sent musical experts to Xinjiang to protect the *12 Mukam* from extinction. Tu'erdiahong, then in his 70s, sang the whole *12 Mukam* twice into a tape recorder. After the recording, the great folk artist passed away. One year later, the *12 Mukam Musical Collection* was published.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government was committed to protecting and promoting the folk arts of ethnic minorities. As research for ethnic minorities' social history and language began in the 1950s, the government organized resources to search for and conserve folk arts. In the early 1980s, a huge publication project was launched, where up to 50,000 experts and cultural workers participated in this project. They spent 20 years compiling folk art materials collected from surveys and published the "Ten Collections and Annals of Chinese Ethnic Folk Literature and Arts" (*Collection of China's Folk Songs, Collection of China's Folk Tales, Collection of China's Folk Proverbs, Collection of China's Folk Ballads, Collection of China's Opera Music, Collection of China's Quyi Music, Collection of China's Folk Dances, Collection of China's Folk Instrumental Music, Annals of China's Local Operas,* and *Annals of China's Quyi*). The collection, a complete record of the folk arts and literature of the 56 ethnic groups was published in 310 volumes.

Ethnic Studies and Collation of Ancient Works

A team of over 3,000 members wrote 401 books consisting of more than 80 million words in over a decade. It was a publishing project that had never been attempted before in China.

The program to compile the *Five Collections on Ethnic Issues* was derived from voluminous materials obtained from social, historical, and linguistic research on ethnic minorities done in the 1950s. In 1964, based on first-hand data collected from social and historical research, the Chinese Academy of Sciences compiled three collections: *The Brief History of Ethnic Minorities in China, A Brief Introduction to Chinese Ethnic Minorities*, and *An Overview of Chinese Ethnic Autonomous Regions.*

In 1978, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission pointed out that the *Three Collections* should continue to be compiled and expanded to *Five Collections*

on Ethnic Issues; where two collections were added: *Ethnic Minorities in China* (1 volume) and *The Collection of Social and Historical Survey Data of Ethnic Minorities in China* (148 volumes).

Thirteen years later in October 1991, *Five Collections on Ethnic Issues* was published by 32 publishing houses. Four hundred and one types of books were published with over 1.83 million copies sold.

The *Five Collections on Ethnic Issues* was a milestone in the study of China's ethnic issues. The value of this first-hand historical data has become increasingly precious as time goes by.

A large-scale collation of ethnic minority ancient works began in 1984. In March of the same year, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission submitted the "Request on Conserving and Collating Ancient Works of Ethnic Minorities" to the central government. In the report, "according to incomplete statistics, there are over 10,000 ancient works of the *Yi* minority scattered around the country. Also, there are more than 10,000 kinds of ancient Tibetan works, and more than 1,500 kinds of ancient Mongolian works. As for ancient Manchu works, there are over 1.5 million archive files, which is just the tip of the iceberg. All these ancient works had never been collated systematically before."

The State Council quickly released exclusive papers on this issue. The papers pointed out that ancient works of ethnic minorities are a part of China's valuable cultural heritage. All local governments and departments will provide adequate manpower as well as financial and material support; they shall create reasonable working conditions for people who are in charge of research and collation, and train talented people for the collation and research of ancient works.

In July 1984, the national planning team for the collation and publication of ancient works of ethnic minorities was founded. The research and collation of ancient works of ethnic minorities started with "saving people." Written ancient works of some ethnic minorities were rarely handed down due to migration. Many ancient songs and ballads were passed down generation after generations orally and were able to survive to this day, thanks to the elderly artists who were still alive. Therefore, "saving people" became the first slogan of saving ancient works.

"Saving books" was the second slogan. A large volume of lost ancient works were found and collected in the survey, and were quickly collated and published. To date, 120,000 (kinds, copies or volumes of) ancient books of ethnic minorities have been saved and 110,000 volumes of books have been collated. Over 5,000 kinds of ancient books from more than 40 ethnic minorities have been published. Meanwhile, this campaign has also trained a group of excellent and talented researchers for the study of ancient ethnic works.

Traditional Sports

In the 1990s, Chinese sports experts found that more than 1,000 folk sports were still being practiced in China until the end of the twentieth century. They were surprised because after 100 years of the influx of Western sports concepts and models, Western sports have become very common in China. Therefore, it was unimaginable that traditional Chinese sports still existed on such a large scale.

The experts were also surprised by another statistical figure. Among these 1,000 traditional sports, more than 700 of them originated from China's 55 ethnic minorities. This demonstrated that China has a rich variety of traditional sports, a large part of which were from ethnic minorities.

In fact, the diversity of ethnic minorities' traditional sports was respected and cherished by the Chinese government as early as the middle of the twentieth century. This was reflected in the National Sports Games for Ethnic Minorities, which have been held in China on a large scale since the 1950s. Till now, there have been eight sports games, and they are welcomed and appreciated by ethnic minorities. Many traditional sports which were on the verge of extinction survived because of these sports events.

A Kazak traditional sport—horse racing.

Mongolian men competing in a wrestling bout. Also known as *Khapsagay*, it is the most important of the Mongolian's "Three Manly Skills," which also include horsemanship and archery.

Besides the National Sports Games for Ethnic Minorities, sports games at the provincial level are also increasing. All provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions hold their own ethnic minority sports games on a regular basis. In addition, the research of ethnic minorities' traditional sports are being conducted. Some schools have begun offering traditional physical education courses of ethnic minorities.

Protecting the Ethnic Minorities' Intangible Cultural Heritages

In the twenty-first century, a movement for preserving intangible cultural heritage evoked many people's strong emotions toward alienated traditional local culture.

2003 was regarded as "the first year for the protection of China's intangible cultural heritage." At the beginning of that year, the Chinese folk culture protection project was officially launched. This project will last until 2020, and a comparatively comprehensive protection system of intangible cultural heritage will be established in China. The Ministry of Culture established China's

Center for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The second Saturday of June every year was identified as the Chinese Cultural Heritage Day. During the coming years, "intangible cultural heritage" will become a frequently-used word in Chinese society.

At the end of 2008, the State Council made public two lists of state-level intangible cultural heritage, totaling 1,028 items. The cultural heritage of ethnic minorities accounted for a significant proportion of these items. In fact, because of the geographical location and backward economy, more original cultural patterns were better preserved in some ethnic minority areas than in Han Chinese areas, which made ethnic minority areas the focus of protecting intangible cultural heritage. In the perspective of intangible culture heritage, ethnic minority culture has shaken off the label of "backwardness" and regained its magical charm.

The intangible culture heritage of ethnic minorities is starting to attract more of people's attention, such that they are now keen to experience it. In the

Left: A monk drawing the *Thangka* in Tongren County, Qinghai. With its origins traced locally, *Regong* art includes many art forms such as the *Thangka,* murals, sculptures, Barbola, butter sculpture, and so on.

Right: An old woman from the Li minority weaving cotton textiles by hand. The traditional textile dyeing and embroidery techniques of the Li minority have been included in the UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The Qiang watchtowers in Sichuan are regarded as architectural masterpieces built by the Qiang minority.

meantime, these heritages have become national key protected objects. For those listed at the national level, the government clearly states that preferential policies will be given to a protection fund and specialized guidance. From 2002 to 2008, 25% of the protection fund was used in ethnic minority areas, much higher than the population proportion of ethnic minorities in the whole country. In order to test the cultural integrity protection model, China established four cultural and ecological preservation experimental zones, two of which are located in ethnic minority areas—the Regong cultural and ecological preservation experimental zone, and the Qiang cultural and ecological preservation experimental zone. The government also established a series of specialized museums, folk museums and education centers for the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. In addition, experts and scholars began discussing the possibility of protecting traditional cultural heritage of minorities by legal means.

After the Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province in 2008, the Qiang minority, who lived at the earthquake's epicenter for a very long time, became the concern of all China. Rescuing Qiang cultural relics and saving endangered Qiang intangible cultural heritage in the earthquake became a top priority in

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PROTECTION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

Since 2002, the Chinese government has accumulated a RMB 386 million fund that has been invested into intangible cultural heritage protection, and about 25% of it has been used in ethnic minority regions. Among the 1,028 items of national-level intangible cultural heritage identified by the State Council, 367 belong to ethnic minorities, accounting for 35.7% of the total. All 55 ethnic minorities have their own enlisted budgets.

Of the 1,488 representative inheritors of state-level intangible cultural heritage, 393 are from ethnic minorities, accounting for 26.4%. Ethnic minority culture heritage, such as Xinjiang Uygur Mukam music, Mongolian long-tune folk songs, ***Dong Grand Song,*** the Tibetan epic ***Gesar,*** Tibetan opera, ***Regong*** art, the ***Epic of Manas*** of the Kirgiz minority, festival of farmers' music and dance of Korean minority, Mongolian Khoomei singing art, and Qinghai ***Hua'er*** have been enlisted in the UN's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind; the Qiang minority's New Year, and the Li minority's traditional textile dyeing and embroidery techniques have been listed in the UN's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

post-quake reconstruction. This shows that in the era of globalization, culture is still being respected and a concern of society, thus culture can been considered as the soul of a nation.

Commercialization of the Traditional Culture of Ethnic Minorities

Is it possible for the culture of ethnic minorities to be commercialized? Definitely!

In the twenty-first century, many changes have occurred in consumption structure and consumer's psychology, and cultural consumption has become a popular trend. Against such a backdrop, the marketization, industrialization, and commercialization of the cultures of ethnic minorities have taken over.

In the past, some people held the view that traditional ethnic culture hindered "modernization," which was a common aspiration of all people, since traditional culture showed great inconsistencies with modernization, and thus contradicted with modernization. For a long period of time, "modernization" and "ethnic traditional culture" were two opposing values in China, which stood for the contradictions between the advanced and the primitive; the rich and the poor.

With the ongoing reform and opening up, the paradox of modernization and traditional culture is changing. Surprisingly, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the two factors complement each other. The public began to investigate if using traditional culture as a competitive advantage would translate into economic advantages for the process of modernization.

This was a dramatic change to Chinese ideas, where past obstacles of modernization have evolved into a very precious resource.

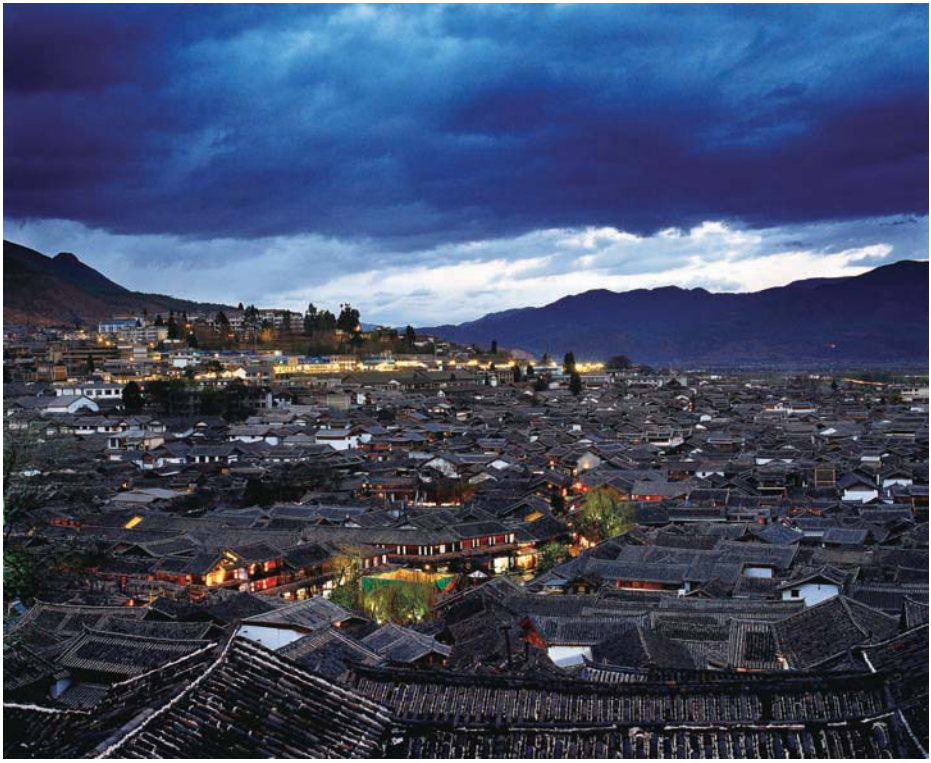
From confrontation to integration, the evolution is accompanied with the gradual progress of modernization with its unique Chinese characteristics. The implementation of a market economy reveals the value of traditional culture, moving the country onto the road of modernization.

On this journey, ethnic minority culture is especially attractive because of its well-preserved original form. This creates many opportunities for it when it is exposed to the modern world.

Nanning International Folk Song Arts Festival has become an international icon of Guangxi.

First of all, traditional ethnic minority culture with its distinctive features is transformed into a priceless tourism resource. Compared with other scenic spots, it does not only provide the tourists with natural landscapes, but also exotic cultural legacies, products, and also lifestyle. In the twenty-first century, ethnic customs and folk cultural legacies have become the driving force of tourism.

Secondly, many cultural activities are developed into "products," and repackaged as cultural "property" for "release" into the market. For example, the largest ethnic minority, the Zhuang minority, has a keen interest in folk songs. In areas where many Zhuang people live, songfests often attract tens of thousands of people. In order to turn it into an economic booster, Guangxi Autonomous Region decided to hold the "Guangxi International Folk Song Festival," forging a commercial chain and developing a series of cultural products. Folk singing, an old cultural tradition, has become an engine of economic growth.



The old town of Lijiang in Yunnan is home to the Naxi people and is also a popular tourist destination.

A case in point is the old town of Lijiang in Yunnan Province, where the Naxi minority lives in compact communities. They rely on ethnic culture to develop the local economy. The ancient town of Lijiang, full of Naxi flavor, has transformed itself from a remote township into an international tourist destination, attracting millions of visitors from various parts of China and abroad each year. Tourism revenues account for half of the local gross domestic product (GDP).

Yunnan Province was once a forgotten region because of its remote location and backward economy. However, since the twenty-first century, the home of 15 ethnic groups has caught the attention of the Chinese. It is considered a haven for visitors, and traveling to Yunnan has become fashionable in people's eyes. In fact, it is the strategic goal of Yunnan to build itself into an ethnic cultural province, to nurture new economic growth points by promoting the local cultural industry on the basis of local ethnic culture.

It is true that during this process, dramatic changes have happened to ethnic cultures. For example, as a post-modern industry, tourism has a deconstructive effect on tourist destinations, decoupling traditional culture from social life, making ethnic culture more like a souvenir or a commercial venture, thus losing its original flavor. This has become a contentious issue.

Of course, this is also an issue worldwide. In China, the idea of "cultural self-awareness" that was proposed by Fei Xiaotong, is a guideline for many scholars working on the above-mentioned issue. In a cultural transition brought on by economic development, an ethnic group should take the initiative to make independent choices regarding its cultural development while adapting to new environments; maintain its original cultural characteristics and position itself well among world cultures. This is what "cultural self-awareness" is about.

Modern Education for China's Ethnic Minorities

After being appointed the President of Central Academy of National Minorities in 1950, Ulanhu established the first institution of higher education for ethnic minorities.

At that time, the newly-established People's Republic of China had to undertake numerous tasks. In spite of financial difficulties, the central government spared no effort to support the construction of the Central Academy of National Minorities. In less than two years, a new campus, designed by famous architect Liang Sicheng, was presented to the public. The campus has a classic

design with distinctive ethnic features: large roofs, gray bricks with tight joints, black tiles, beams and red columns with trees and flowers planted around the premises.

Over the next 50 years, 15 institutions of higher education for ethnic minorities were established in China. Six of them are under the supervision of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, namely Minzu University of China, Southwest University for Nationalities, South-Central University for Nationalities, Northwest University for Nationalities, North University for Nationalities, and Dalian Nationalities University. The remaining nine are under the administration of provincial governments, and they are: Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities, Guangxi University for Nationalities, Yunnan University for Nationalities, Qinghai University for Nationalities, Tibet Institute for Nationalities, Guizhou University for Nationalities, Hubei University for Nationalities, and Sichuan University for Nationalities.

All the above universities and colleges have developed multi-level diversified educational models focusing on undergraduate education, supplemented by preparatory, graduate, doctorate, and post-doctorate education, as well as cadre training. The latest surveys show that the number of students has exceeded 200,000 in these 15 ethnic universities and colleges.

Minzu University of China, one of the highest institutions of higher education for ethnic minorities in China.

Special Educational Policies

In China, the education of ethnic minorities is a sacred mission to improve the comprehensive quality and economic status of ethnic minorities.

In order to promote the education of ethnic minorities, the central government endorses autonomy in developing the education of ethnic minorities. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China stipulates that government organs in autonomous areas may decide on their own local educational programs, including the establishment of schools, the duration of compulsory schooling, educational systems, curricula, teaching languages, and procedures for enrollment.

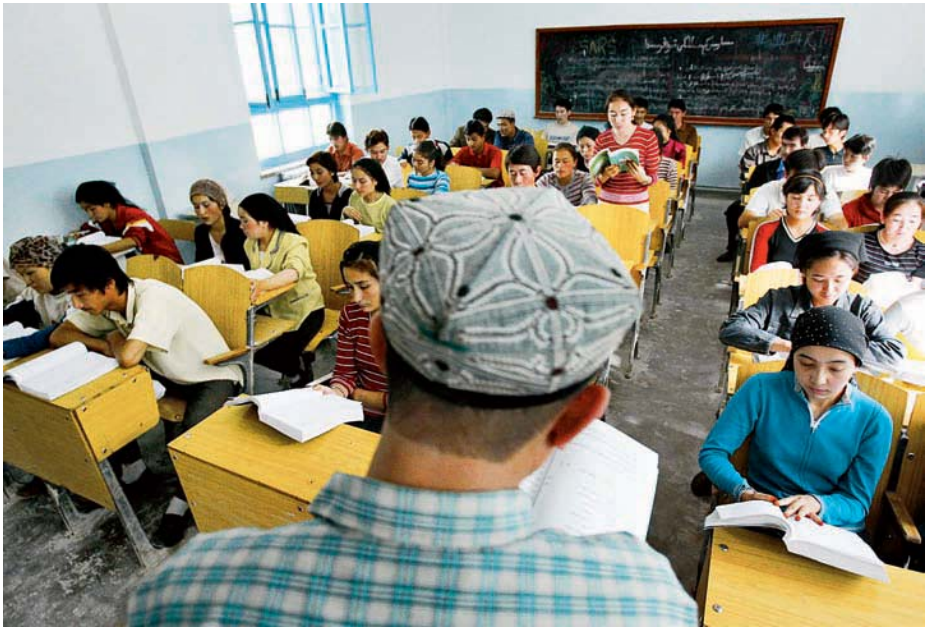
Because of their relatively backward local economy, ethnic minorities may be financially incapable of developing their education. As early as the beginning of the People's Republic of China, the government set up a fund to subsidize the education of ethnic minorities. This is a fund that ethnic minority schools of various types and levels enjoy, apart from subsidies that common schools also have, and the amount of this fund has increased continually in the past decades.

In the annual enrollment of colleges, universities, and polytechnics, favorable policies for students from ethnic minorities also apply. Based on the various local situations in different provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, these measures take the form of lowering admission scores, reserving a certain quota of candidates from ethnic minorities, setting separate admission scores, or making preferential enrollment policies for these ethnic minorities with small populations.

All schools in China are open to both students of the Han Chinese and ethnic minorities. However, many local governments have either opened ethnic schools for students of ethnic minorities, or set up ethnic classes for ethnic minority students in common schools.

Ethnic schools refer to educational institutions that mainly enroll students from ethnic minorities, including high schools, primary schools as well as vocational schools. It is either founded by a single ethnic minority or co-established by two or more ethnic minorities. The aim of ethnic schools is not to differentiate the ethnicity of students. The government gives priority to them in terms of staff and facilities, and ensures that ethnic minority languages are taught at the same time.

Ethnic minorities' classes are a form of special education which is similar to common schools in terms of teachers and facilities, except that they only enroll students of ethnic minorities. Even after lowering the admission scores for them, there were still a low proportion of students from ethnic minorities enrolled in such classes. Hence, in 1980, the Chinese Ministry of Education



A classroom of an ethnic school in Xinjiang.

decided to open ethnic minorities' classes in the five universities under its direct administration. Afterward, such classes were also started in some medical colleges, institutes of water conservancy and hydroelectric power, as well as institutes of physical education. In 1984, documents were released by the Ministry of Education and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, which specified the regulations on enrollment, placement of graduates, courses, and administrative management of ethnic minorities' classes, making this educational form more mature and practical. Since then, ethnic minorities' classes have been started in key middle schools, vocational schools, and schools for adult education.

Ethnic minorities' classes in primary and middle schools were established for students in places where there were no ethnic schools. Only students of ethnic minorities can attend these classes. These attendees are eligible for scholarships, tuition exemption or reduction, and subsidies will be given to students with financial difficulties. Most students of ethnic minorities' classes eat in school cafeterias and are given the same treatment as those attending boarding schools.

Boarding schools are an effective measure by the Chinese government to improve the educational conditions of ethnic minorities. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy clearly stipulates that public ethnic primary and middle schools that provide boarding and allowances to most students are established in pastureland and mountainous regions,

Mongolian children playing in a school.

where families mostly have financial difficulties and live in desolate locations. In practice, autonomous governments at all levels shall open ethnic primary and middle schools that provide boarding to students in sparsely populated areas with poor transport services, especially in prairie and nomadic regions. All the costs for the construction of these schools shall be assumed by provincial, municipal and county governments, and by the central government through preferential treatment in terms of funding, teaching staff salaries, and facilities. Students in boarding schools are eligible for scholarships, tuition exemption, and subsidies. Today, there are 6,000 primary and middle boarding schools in China for her ethnic minorities.

Preparatory education for ethnic minorities is a development unique to China. As a special phase in higher education, it serves as a transition period for students enrolled into universities through preferential policies. It works in this manner: in normal or ethnic minority universities, preparatory courses are conducted especially for ethnic minority students. These are tailor-made supplementary courses for students with poor academic background.

Since the 1950s, preparatory programs have been offered in many technical secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Preparatory education has become part of the ethnic educational system and a shortcut to speed up their educational progress. Usually, preparatory programs last one year, but they may be prolonged to two if the students have a poorer command of

Daur students attending a computer class.

Chinese. After finishing the courses, ethnic minority students who have passed the examinations go directly to universities or colleges for further education.

Bilingual Education

As stipulated in the Law of the People's Republic of China on Ethnic Regional Autonomy, bilingual education is a basic educational system practiced among schools in ethnic regions. This means that school lessons are conducted in both their mother tongue and the Chinese language where ethnic minorities congregate, and have their own spoken and written languages. This system, based on local situations, caters to the will of ethnic minorities.

Considering the different language environments and status of written languages among different ethnic minorities in various regions, native language education and bilingual education are mainly divided into three types:

(1) For schools in areas where ethnic minorities have spoken languages, but no written languages and Chinese is the commonly used language; courses are conducted in both Chinese and their mother tongue, but courses are not run for native languages.

(2) For ethnic minorities who have widely spoken and written languages, courses are taught in both Chinese and their mother tongue. Schools run both local language and Chinese courses, and emphasize the acquisition and application of ethnic languages.

(3) For ethnic minorities who have their own spoken and written languages, but use Chinese more often, courses are taught in both Chinese and their mother tongue. Schools run courses for both local languages and Chinese, and emphasize the acquisition and application of Chinese.

The country has been very supportive of bilingual education. For example, favorable financial measures have been taken to improve the editing, translating, proofreading and printing of textbooks into ethnic minority languages.

Currently, bilingual education is carried out in over 10,000 schools in 13 provinces and autonomous regions in the country. In these schools, there are six million ethnic minority students from 21 ethnic groups, speaking 60 ethnic minority languages in total.

Ethnic minority students learning Chinese phonetics in a class in Yunnan.

Chapter 6

Economies of Ethnic Minorities in China

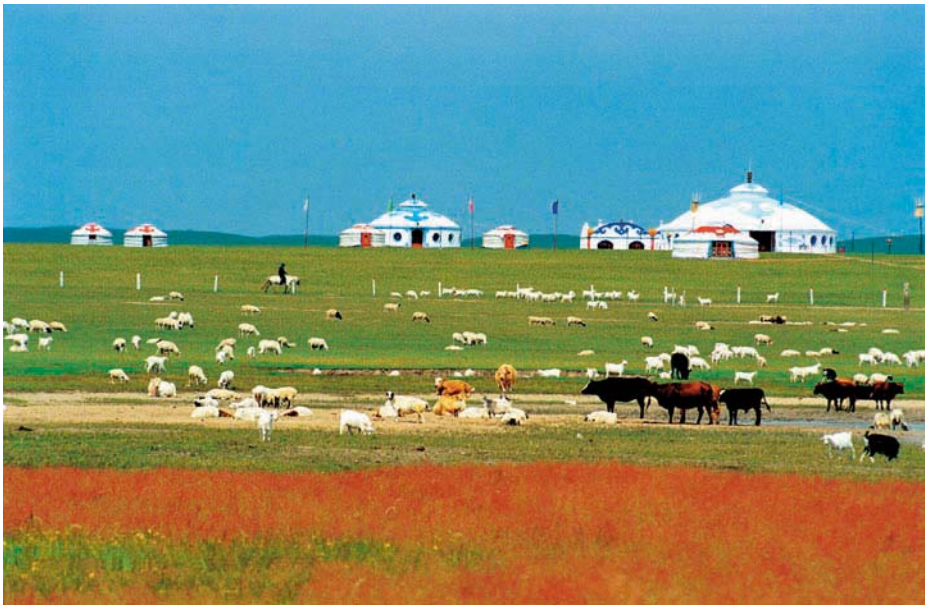
Are There Any Independent Ethnic Minority Economies?

In March 1979, nobody was skeptical when the "Economics of Chinese Ethnic Minorities" was listed as 27th among the 30 disciplines for scientific development and planning of the national economy of China. In the initial stage of reform and opening up, people saw an urgency to establish a discipline to study the economic development of ethnic minorities and their ethnic regions.

However, by the end of the 1980s, with a holistic and in-depth development of the market economy in China, a question began to surface: in a market economy, are there still any independent ethnic minority economies or ethnic regional economies?

The development of a market economy leaps over the boundaries of various closed economic systems that were a result of the planned economy in China. Thus, regional economies that used to be divided by administrative units, geographic units, or communities have all gradually disappeared from the country.

In China's market economy, economies once divided by administrative units, such as Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang, and economies divided by communities, such as the Hui and Tibetan minorities have seen the gradual disappearance of their relative isolation and independence. Under the law of value in a market economy, through the optimal allocation of production



With her beautiful grassland scenery and ethnic customs, tourism has become one of Inner Mongolia's important revenue generators.

factors and resources, every part of the country, including ethnic autonomous areas, as well as China's 56 ethnic groups, are closely linked and inseparable.

The socialist market economy with its unique Chinese characteristics has changed the traditional economic system of ethnic minorities in China: forming a new pattern of economic development, raising the level of economic development of ethnic groups, and improving the living standards of the 55 ethnic minorities.

Although relatively independent ethnic regional economies or ethnic minority economies in a planned economy are no longer a subject of research, the economics of ethnic groups has broadened its fields of study, made impressive achievements, and also established an innovative theoretical system in domains such as bridging the gap between eastern and western China, sustainable development of ethnic regions, development of economic acceleration strategies, human resources development in western China, the ecosystem in western China, the opening up of borders and border trade, and the urbanization of ethnic regions and the rural economy.

Thus far, the economics of ethnic groups as an academic discipline has been established in 30 higher educational institutions for undergraduates, masters students, doctorates, and post-doctorates in China. From 1994 to 2002, 6,200 research papers on the economics of ethnic groups in well-known Chinese

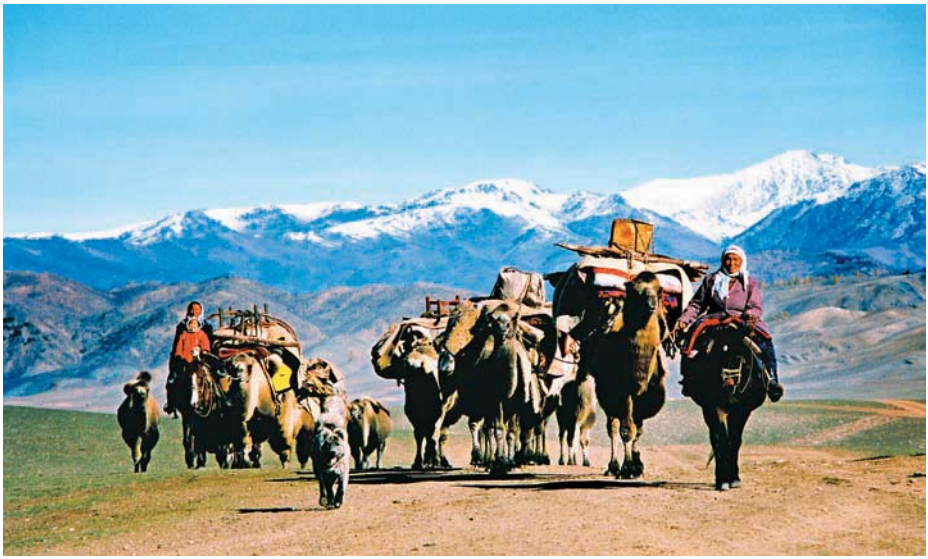
academic journals were published. The growth of this discipline reflects the active, dynamic, and continuous changes of the Chinese ethnic minority economies in the last three decades.

Transition of the Traditional Economy

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, ethnic minorities were mainly engaged in traditional farming and animal husbandry: some regions were still using the method of "slash and burn" agriculture; iron tools had not been widely used and in some areas, people were still using implements made of wood or stone.

However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the traditional economies of these ethnic minorities generally completed their transitions in varying degrees.

The Oroqen and Ewenki minorities in northeastern China once depended on hunting and gathering to live; and the Hezhen minority mainly sustained themselves by fishing. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, with the guidance and help of the government, the Oroqen and Ewenki minorities completed their gradual transition to settled farming. In the 1990s,



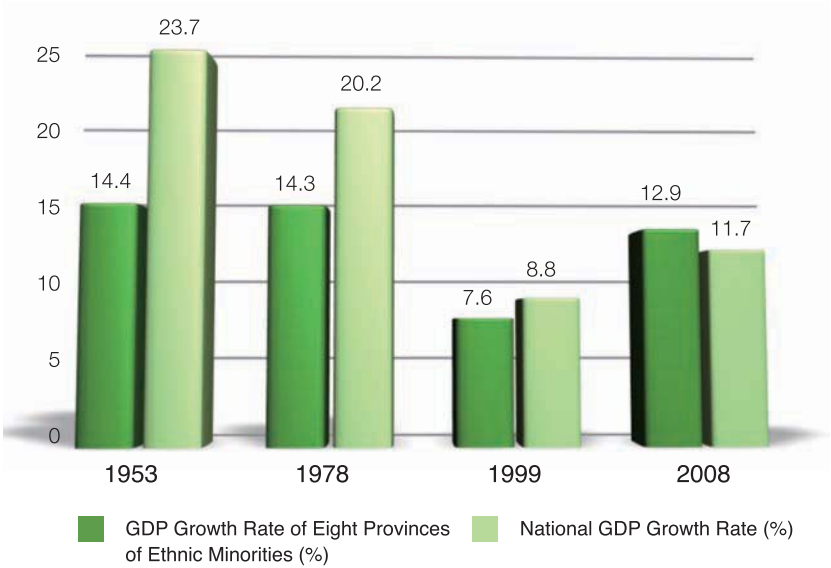
Nomadic tribes are mainly concentrated in the northern and northwestern regions of China, most of whom have already settled down.

Ethnic minority people farming in the countryside of Yunnan.

the Hezhen minority bade farewell to fishing and hunting, and began farming. Owing to the tourism potential of the Hezhen minority's fishing and hunting culture, the local government helped to develop it. Since then, tourist activities in regions inhabited by the Hezhen minority have been developed into a leading industry.

Ethnic groups in northern and western China used to lead nomadic lives, such as the Mongol, Tibetan, Kazak, Kirgiz, Yugur, and Tajik minorities. Since the 1950s, the Chinese government has encouraged settled grazing instead of a nomadic life, called for the combination of farming and animal husbandry, as well as secondary production, such as processing animal products. Nowadays, these ethnic groups are no longer pure herdsmen. They are engaged in agricultural production and cash crops cultivation but they also continue with grazing. Also, villages and towns have emerged in previously nomadic regions.

Ethnic groups in southern and southwestern China, such as the She, Va, Lahu, Lisu, and Nu minorities, generally adopted the "slash and burn" agricultural method before the founding of the People's Republic of China. However, under the central government's assistance and planning, these ethnic groups have adopted settled farming instead.



Comparisons on GDP growth rates between the eight provinces of ethnic minorities and the whole of China.

Generally speaking, the level of economic development of certain ethnic minorities who live together with the Han Chinese or near regions inhabited by the Han Chinese in compact communities, have basically reached or are close to the economic level of the Han Chinese, such as the Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, and Korean minorities. For more than half a century, the economic development in these ethnic regions kept pace with the Han Chinese region: from traditional agriculture to modern intensive agriculture; and a large-scale development of modern industry and commodity-based economy.

To briefly sum up the changes of the ethnic minority economies over the past half century, these economies have gradually transformed themselves from a natural economy to a commodity-based economy.

Supportive Policies of the Central Government

In 1995, the total fiscal revenue of ethnic autonomous regions in China reached RMB 30.8 billion, while the total fiscal expenditure was RMB 74.6 billion. In 2006, the total fiscal revenue of ethnic autonomous regions in China was RMB 128 billion, while the total fiscal expenditure reached RMB 373.4 billion.

These two sets of figures show the tremendous economic growth of ethnic autonomous regions in China and at the same time raised a question: between the fiscal revenue and expenditure in ethnic autonomous regions, there was a huge gap—RMB 43.8 billion in 1995 and as much as RMB 245.4 billion in 2006.

So who filled this huge gap? The answer is state finance.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the fiscal expenditure of ethnic autonomous regions in China has relied on subsidies from the state and local finance at the provincial level. According to official statistics from 1959 to 2008 (Tibet carried out a democratic reform in 1959) which were incomplete, financial aid provided by the central government to Tibet amounted to RMB 201.9 billion, with an average annual growth rate of nearly 12%; from 1955 to 2008 (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established in 1955), financial aid provided by the central government to Xinjiang totaled RMB 375.2 billion, with an average annual growth rate of 11%.

Judging from the financial aid policy, we can get a clear picture of the policy that the Chinese government has pursued consistently concerning the economic development of ethnic minorities and ethnic regions: vigorously supporting and narrowing the gap, and achieving common prosperity.

As early as the 1960s, the Chinese government implemented the "Three Financial Aid" policies in ethnic autonomous regions. Firstly, an additional 5% emergency fund is added to the fiscal expenditure budget in ethnic autonomous regions. Secondly, the proportion of financial reserves in ethnic autonomous regions is higher than that in other regions. Thirdly, an

A silk factory in Hotan, Xinjiang.

The Manzhouli port in Inner Mongolia is the largest land port of entry in China, serving as a distribution center for a large number of imported and exported goods.

annual subsidy is provided to ethnic minority regions for certain special expenditures.

After the 1990s, besides fixed quotas for financial subsidies, China has established some special subsidies to support the development of various undertakings in ethnic regions. For instance, education subsidies for border areas and ethnic minority regions, border construction subsidies, funds for supporting the development of underdeveloped regions, and funds earmarked for construction in Tibet.

With regards to taxation, ethnic autonomous regions are endowed with a certain degree of decision-making power in terms of tax reduction. The provincial governments in ethnic autonomous regions are entitled to reduce local taxes included in local financial revenues. Meanwhile, the government has carried out some policies of moderate tax reduction in ethnic regions. For example, the government has reduced the tax on enterprises in ethnic regions and manufacturers of ethnic minority products.

As for finance, the central government has set up special loans for ethnic regions, offering favorable interest rates, easing lending restrictions and

repayment periods. For example, the government has established special trade subsidies in ethnic regions and special poverty discount loans for pastureland.

With regards to investment, China has formulated preferential policies to guide and encourage foreign and domestic investment in ethnic autonomous regions, giving priority to reasonable arrangements of resource development projects and infrastructure construction projects in ethnic autonomous regions. For more than half a century, a number of key projects were built in succession, such as the Sichuan-Tibet Highway, Qinghai-Tibet Highway, Lanzhou-Xinjiang Railway, Qinghai-Tibet Railway, Lhasa Airport, Lanzhou-Xining-Lhasa Optical Cabling Project, and Ningxia Yellow River Irrigation Project. These projects have vastly improved local infrastructure, such as transportation and communication, as well as production and living conditions in ethnic regions. The establishment of large industrial enterprises has also transformed ethnic regions into several industrial bases for resource exploration and processing, such as the iron and steel-making base in Baotou of Inner Mongolia, Karamay Oilfield in Xinjiang, Yunnan Tin Company Group Limited in Gejiu, Tarim Oilfield in Xinjiang, potash fertilizer project in Qinghai, and large-sized coal-firer power generators in Inner Mongolia.

In the exploitation of natural resources in ethnic regions, autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas are permitted to rationally explore and exploit local resources; and the country will financially compensate these ethnic autonomous regions that produce natural resources. Coal mines, power generation plants, and forestry enterprises established by the central government in ethnic autonomous areas are entitled to a proportion of both the profits and products.

The War against Poverty

Before 1949, most ethnic minorities in China lived a hard life, especially those living in the mountainous areas and deserts where food and clothing were scarce, and for several months each year, food supplies would be unavailable. These people could only eat wild fruits and wear straw or palm-bark raincoats to protect themselves against the cold weather.

For many years, the Chinese government formulated a series of anti-poverty measures for ethnic minorities, such as granting loans and distributing farming tools to the poor in ethnic minority regions, providing free medical services, opening public schools, and offering social subsidies. However, in 1985, there was still a substantial population of over 40 million poor people in ethnic regions.

Tibetan farmers harvesting wheat.

In 1986, China declared war against poverty and launched a planned, organized, and extensively development-oriented poverty relief scheme. At that time, there were 125 million people living in poverty with a poverty rate of 14.8%. Two decades later, the number of people living in poverty had dropped to 2.165 million, with a lower poverty rate of 2.5%.

Half of the poor's population in China is made up of ethnic minorities. They mainly live in the Karst areas in the southwest, frigid and wet areas in the northwest, desert steppes in the northwest, and arid mountainous areas in the northwest. The harsh natural environments have become the biggest obstacle in the war against poverty.

The Karst area in the northwest of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region covers an area of 89,000 square kilometers which has extremely barren soil. More than 85% of poverty-stricken people in Guangxi live there and almost all of them are from the Zhuang, Yao, and Miao minorities. A report describes the life there as: the people channeled water droplets from high rock crevices into water vats at the foot of mountains using an iron wire; the corn plants grown in rock crevices was only one meter high and a corn ear was no larger than a human fist.

The pastures of Tian Shan Mountain in Xinjiang.

The poverty relief effort in Guangxi was considered a "20-year war in Karst hilly areas." In the mid-1980s, there were 15 million poor people in the rural areas of Guangxi. By 2004, there were about 840,000 people without enough food and clothing in Guangxi. The figures show that close to 14 million people have been lifted out of poverty due to the long and painstaking "war" in the past 20 years.

In the war against poverty, China always pays close attention to ethnic regions. Ethnic minority regions enjoy a comparatively flexible standard and special aid is given when the country identifies key poor-stricken areas. As for poverty relief investments in capital and goods, ethnic minority regions also benefit in more allocations than the other regions. In addition, the government set up a special fund for development and poverty relief for ethnic minorities.

Educational, intellectual development, and science and technology poverty relief schemes have been deployed for the purpose of improving the quality of poverty-stricken people. They are regarded as the trump cards in winning the anti-poverty war.

By 2008, the number of poor people living in ethnic regions in China was down to 7.7 million. In 2009, China adopted a new standard for poverty relief and fully implemented the anti-poverty policy in all low-income populations in rural areas of ethnic regions.

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POVERTY RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC AUTONOMOUS AREAS

Among the 331 impoverished counties designated as key recipients of state aid in 1986, 141 were in ethnic autonomous areas, accounting for 42.6% of the total. In 1994, the state began implementing the "Seven-Year Program for Delivering 80 Million People out of Poverty," and among the 592 impoverished counties designated as key recipients of state aid, 257 were in ethnic autonomous areas, accounting for 43.4% of the total. The Outline Program for Poverty Alleviation and Development in the Rural Areas of China, which was implemented in 2001, once again recognized ethnic minority areas as key targets for assistance. In the 592 counties newly designated for state poverty alleviation and development, 267 were located in ethnic autonomous areas (excluding Tibet), accounting for 45.1% of the total. Tibet as a whole has been included as a target for key poverty alleviation and development from the state.

Ethnic Trade System

China's ethnic trade policy is unique in the world. The so-called "ethnic trade" system is a form of commodity trade in which the Chinese government adopts special supportive policies in accordance with the characteristics of the ethnic regions.

In the early years of the PRC, commodity trade in ethnic regions showed two striking observations, to which the government attached great importance. Firstly, many ethnic minorities lived in mountainous, highland, and grassland areas, with poor transport facilities, and goods distribution were often delayed due to transport difficulties, resulting in low efficiency in commodity trade enterprises. Secondly, all ethnic groups demanded commodities closely related to traditional culture, customs, and faith. And many ethnic groups had special needs for certain commodities. For instance, there is a high demand for silver by the Miao, Yao, and Dong minorities because of their unique traditional costumes; the Tibetan minority's love for tea; the special needs for Mongolian bowls and knives in Inner Mongolia; and the need for *halal* food by Muslims (the Hui minority). The special attention given to the two unique observations fostered the establishment of an ethnic trade policy system by the Chinese government for the following decades.

The first national ethnic trade conference was held in August 1951. Chen Yun, then Vice-Premier of the Government Administration Council, declared at the conference that people should never regard ethnic trade simply as trading; ethnic trade is the concrete embodiment of ethnic policies and people working in ethnic trade are the ones who had implemented and enforced ethnic policies.

By 1963, five nationwide conferences on ethnic trade had been held. Within that year, the concept of "three preferential policies for ethnic trade" officially emerged. The three aid policies were: "profit retention"—ethnic trade enterprises could retain 80% of the total profits, 30 percentage points higher than general enterprises; "self-owned funds"—wholesale enterprises had 50% self-owned funds, while retail enterprises had 80%, and local or state finance would make up the remainder. The government offered price subsidies in various forms to ethnic trade enterprises when they purchased farm and secondary products and sold daily industrial products, and gave freight subsidies to enterprises that delivered goods to remote places.

With the promotion of the market economy in China, ethnic trade policy has, after several important revisions, become a new policy system in line with the socialist market economy. In terms of content, the new preferential policy for ethnic trade includes finance, banking, taxation, and industry. As a means

A street-side restaurant serving *halal* food in Shanghai.

of support, it includes earmarked allocations, discounted loans, tax reduction, favorable interest rates, and guidance for industry. Its beneficiaries include ethnic trade enterprises in ethnic trade counties, ethnic trade corporations at provincial and prefectural levels, and designated manufacturers of ethnic commodities which are at demand. As for the distribution of sectors that benefited, they are the clothing, arts and crafts, ethnic minority medicine, Muslim food, tea sold at border areas, publications in ethnic languages, folk musical instruments, and sports equipment for ethnic minorities, with all aspects of production involved.

The long-term national support to ethnic trade and ethnic commodities has lowered production and operating costs, strengthened market competitiveness and promoted commodity circulation and market prosperity in ethnic minority regions.

Western China Development Strategy

Since 1999, the phrase "development of western China" has frequently appeared in Chinese society. Since China's reform and opening up in the late 1970s, regional development strategies have basically gone through four stages: giving priority to the eastern coastal areas; coordinating the development of eastern and western China; attaching importance to and supporting the development of the central and western parts of China; and implementing the western China development strategy.

The gap between eastern and western China in terms of economic development is both a longstanding issue in history and an issue of overall significance for social development in China. To achieve the coordinated development of eastern and western China is an important strategic decision for the country in the twenty-first century.

Nearly 70% of the ethnic minority population lives in western China; ethnic minority regions cover 75% of western China, and 33% of the population are ethnic minorities. Therefore, the western China development strategy proposed in 1999 is closely related to the economic development of ethnic regions. The Communist Party of China Central Committee (CPCCC) clarified that the implementation of the western China development strategy was aimed at accelerating the economic development of ethnic minorities and ethnic regions.

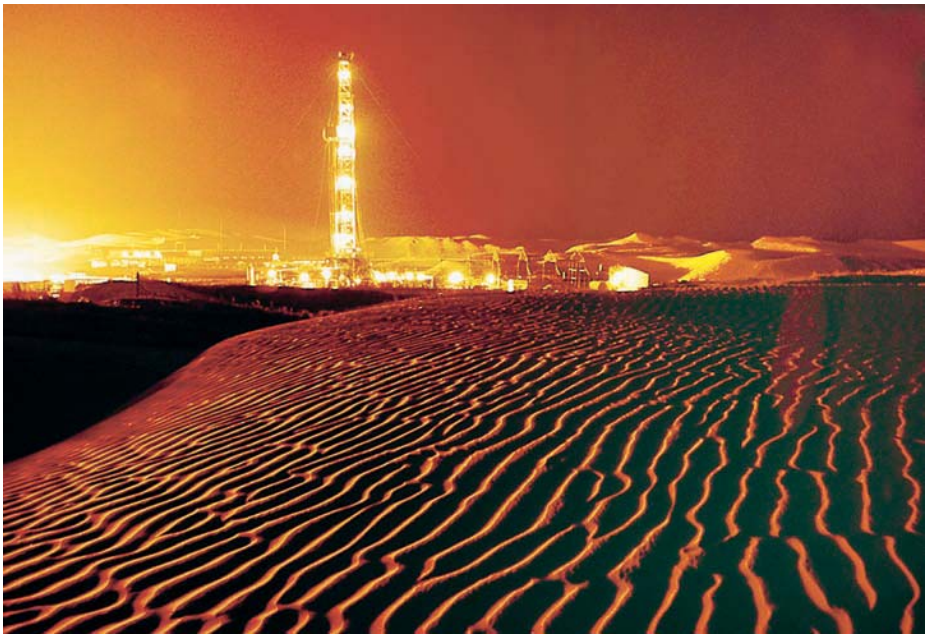
Strictly speaking, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region do not belong to the western part of China from a geographical point of view. However, they are included in the scope of the western China development strategy. Furthermore, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture

The Qinghai-Tibet Railway runs from Xining of Qinghai to Lhasa of Tibet, It began operations in July 2006.

in the northeast, Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province, as well as Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hunan Province, which are not geographically located in the west of China, are also included in this preferential policy.

In 2000, China made substantial progress in developing the western regions in China. The newly-started "10 Projects" focused on infrastructure construction to improve transportation and the electrical power grid system in western China. In the interests of ethnic minorities and ethnic regions in the western China development plan, the country implemented many preferential measures, such as giving priority to the exploitation and processing of resources in ethnic regions, compensating those ethnic autonomous areas that produce natural resources, guiding and encouraging enterprises in developed areas to invest in ethnic regions, and increasing financial investment and financial support in ethnic regions.

Since the implementation of the western China development strategy, a number of key projects have been completed, such as the "West-to-East China" Natural Gas Transmission Project and "East-to-West China" Power Transmission Project, and infrastructure such as airports, highways, and hydroelectric projects, all of which have created better conditions for development in ethnic



The Karamay oil field in Xinjiang is an important petrochemical base in western China.

Wind turbines are used to generate "green" electricity in Inner Mongolia.

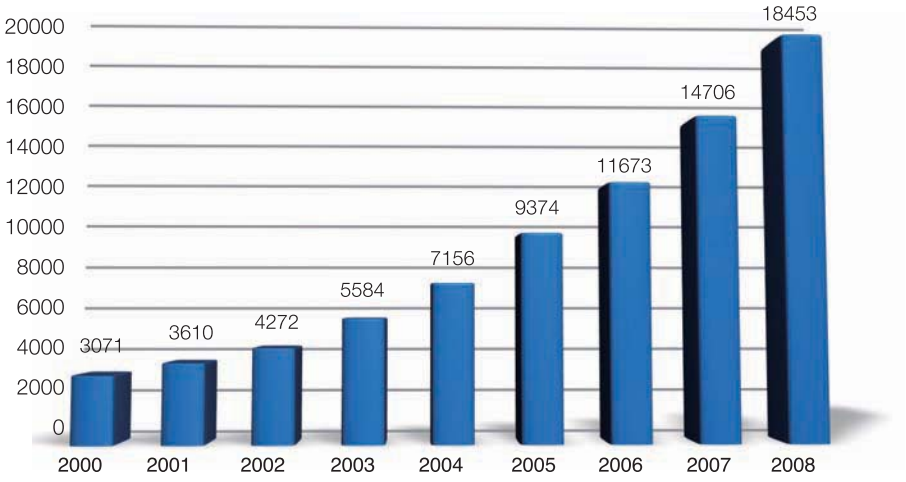
communities. In 2006, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway was opened for rail travel and goods transportation. This railway, which is the highest in the world, ended Tibet's history of not having railways, and built an inexpensive and fast transportation line between Tibet and China's inland cities.

By 2008, the investments in fixed assets in ethnic regions had reached RMB 7.7899 trillion since the implementation of the western China development strategy. The western areas are the source of large rivers in China, and so the ecosystem there is rather fragile. Therefore, the major tasks of the western China development strategy also include stopping the deterioration of the ecosystem in western China, improving the eco-environment, and promoting environmental protection.

Partnered Assistance

Partnered assistance is a unique feature in China. It is a practice led and organized by the Chinese government where developed inland provinces and cities help selected underdeveloped areas with their social and economic development.

In 1979, the country made a list of partnered-assisted areas: Beijing to assist Inner Mongolia, Hebei to help out Guizhou, Jiangsu to assist Guangxi and Xinjiang, Shandong to help out Qinghai, Shanghai to lend a hand to Yunnan and Ningxia, and finally the whole nation to assist Tibet. This list



Fixed assets investment in ethnic regions after the start of the western China development strategy (unit: RMB 100 million)

includes five ethnic minority autonomous regions and three provinces with a larger proportion of the ethnic minority population—Yunnan, Guizhou, and Qinghai.

Tibet is the focus of national support. In 1984, the CPCCC decided to implement "projects with state's direct investment, financial subsidies from the central government, and nationwide partnered assistance to Tibet," which stated that nine comparatively developed provinces and cities together with several ministries and commissions would help Tibet with the construction of 43 small and medium-sized projects closely related to people's livelihood. And the total investment was close to RMB 500 million.

In 1994, an upsurge in "nationwide support for Tibet" began in China. From 1994 to 2001, 15 provinces offered partnered assistance together with central ministries and commissions, and provided free aid for the construction of 716 projects. The annual GDP growth rate of Tibetan Autonomous Region reached 11.9% over the same period, higher than the national average for many years; a vast majority of poverty-stricken people no longer faced a shortage of food and clothing, and some even began to live a relatively comfortable life.

Winter supplies for the Tibetans were airlifted to Gonggar Airport in Lhasa from inland China.

Engineering machinery and equipments being transported from inland China to Xinjiang.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC REGIONS

In 2008, the economic aggregate of ethnic regions increased from RMB 5.79 billion in 1952 to RMB 3.06062 trillion, with an increase of 92.5 times according to comparable prices. The per capita disposable income of the urban population increased to RMB 13,170, which was over 30 times more than that in 1978 (RMB 307); the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen went up to RMB 3,389, which was 20 times more than that in 1978 (RMB 138). The economic growth rate of Inner Mongolia has been ranked first in the country for seven consecutive years; Xinjiang has maintained a double-digit economic growth rate for six years; the total output value of Tibet in 2008 reached RMB 39.591 billion, which was 66 times more than that in 1959.

In 2001, China once again made the decision of extending the partnered assistance program to Tibet for another 10 years, and the 29 Tibetan counties without partnered assistance would be included in this program in different ways. The country would also bear the expenses for the construction of key projects in Tibet.

Chapter 7

Religious Beliefs of the Chinese People

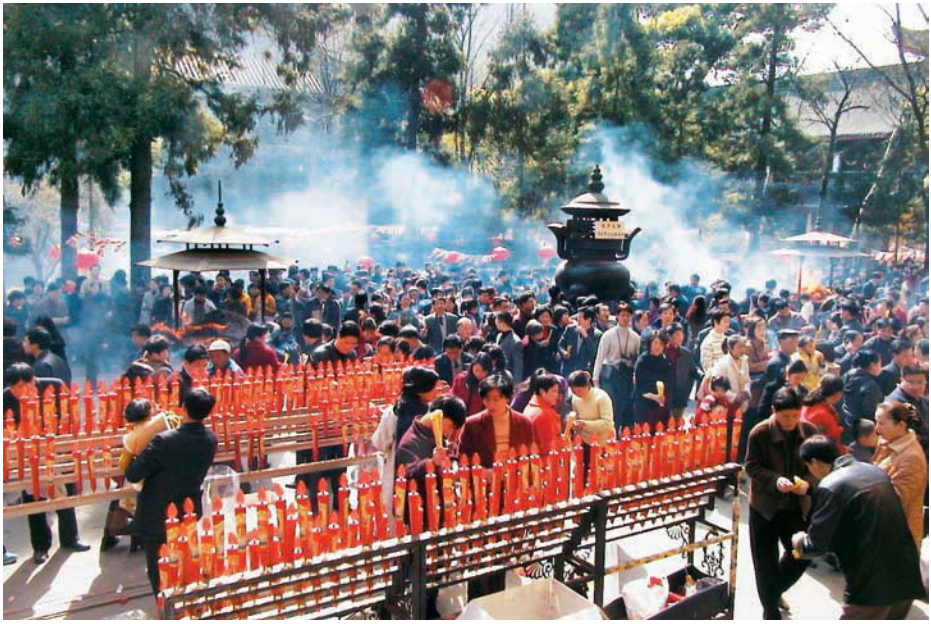
Don't the Chinese Have Any Religious Beliefs?

The Chinese media once reported that many Africans had the impression that the Chinese did not have religious beliefs. In Africa, when people go to government offices, they always need to fill in a series of forms. However, they noticed that the Chinese nationals working in Africa would always leave the category of religion blank. Therefore, the Africans were puzzled: how could people not have any religious beliefs? And what made the Africans even more curious was that the Chinese work on Sundays instead of going to church.

Don't the Chinese have any religious beliefs? Knowledge of Chinese history would help us to answer this question.

In many parts of the world, people always associate China with Confucius. The sage has become a "popular" representative of Chinese culture. Indeed, this philosopher who lived more than 2,500 years ago, had a great impact on Chinese culture with his doctrines. In that sense, it can be said that contemporary Chinese people's lives are a product of Confucian culture.

Confucian culture holds a rational attitude toward society and life, and focuses on politics, ethics, and moral standards in practice. It believes that human rationality is the cornerstone of people's happiness and that the pursuit of a moral life leads to the transcendence of life itself. Thus, Confucian culture does not pursue happiness based on fantasy.



This picture shows devotees praying and making offerings at Lingyin Monastery in Hangzhou, Zhejiang.

How does Western culture look at Confucian culture? As early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Confucian philosophy shed new light on the philosophers in the Enlightenment period in Europe. Once, the great German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), argued that Confucian ethics was based on human rationality, and that China displayed characteristics of an "almost ideal state," more or less realizing Plato's "ideal state." Another great French philosopher Voltaire (1694–1778), also advocated Confucian culture. He once wrote, "It is ethics and law that the Chinese, taught by Confucius, understand best, nurture with the utmost care and devote all their time and energy to … the happiest ever and most delightful time in the world is when people followed Confucius' laws."

Interestingly enough, although Confucian culture did not pursue everlasting happiness, it later developed into a religious system called Confucianism. But it is still a hotly debated issue over whether there is a "Confucian religion" in China. However, in China, there is a common saying that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are regarded as the "three main religions" of China. The Chinese people once considered *Four Books* and *Five Classics* to be Confucian classics, and regarded the worship of ancestors and Confucius as prescribed rituals. As a matter of fact, Confucian philosophy in essence, is the knowledge of life. It is a combination of

Pilgrims performing rites on the Tibetan Plateau.

A Taoist devotee making an offering to the gods.

seeking enlightenment and obtaining knowledge, which resolves not only questions in beliefs but also in knowledge; thus it is a philosophy as well as a religion.

Ancient China experienced a special process of cultural development which was independent of the history of Western thought. As for religion, it may not work to simply "import" a set of Western concepts into China because Chinese culture has its own uniqueness.

Religious Beliefs in China

The massive influence that Confucian culture and Confucianism exerted on China does not indicate that the Chinese do not have any religions. In fact, there are five major religions in China. In addition, countless folk beliefs also exist in the country.

Buddhism, introduced from India in the first century, has the largest group of devotees in China. Currently, China has more than 13,000 Buddhist monasteries with some 200,000 monks and nuns. Since it does not have strict admittance rites, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Buddhists. According to the official statistics released by the national organization of Buddhism in China—the Buddhist Association of China—the country has about 100 million Buddhists.

This picture shows a prayer session at the Dongguan Mosque in Xining, Qinghai.

Taoism is a local religion that was started in the second century based on the ancient philosophy of Tao in China. There are more than 1,500 Taoist temples nationwide with 25,000 Taoist priests and nuns. It is also difficult to account for the actual number of followers as Taoism, like Buddhism, does not have strict admittance rites.

Islam was brought into China in the seventh century. Muslims are mainly distributed among 10 ethnic minorities. Scholars usually use the total population of these 10 ethnic minorities, which amounts to 20 million, as a reference when they need to provide the total number of Muslims in China.

Catholicism was introduced into China in the thirteenth century, and experienced several

Catholics praying in a church in the countryside of Yunnan.

A Christian church in Harbin, Heilongjiang.

ups and downs until the 1940s, when a large number of Catholic missionaries entered China. Now, the country is home to over five million Catholics with more than 5,000 churches.

Christianity (referred to as Protestantism in particular) made its way into China in 1807. By 2002, there were 16 million Christians and 8,000 Protestant churches in China.

Many Han Chinese are religious, but they only account for less than 10% of the total population of religious believers in China. Ethnic minorities in China have a large proportion of believers with deep faith in their religions. According to official statistics, religious believers account for over 50% of the total population in 55 ethnic minorities. In more than 20 ethnic minorities, everyone used to be a religious believer historically, and current religious believers still occupy a majority.

Introduction to the Five Major Religions

Buddhism

Chinese Buddhism

In the year 64, guided by a magical dream, Emperor Ming of the Eastern Han Dynasty (reigned 58–75) sent envoys to the Western Regions of China, in search of Buddhist doctrines. Three years later, envoys returned to the capital of Luoyang with two Buddhist monks from India, and also brought back Buddhist scriptures and statues. The White Horse Monastery was specially built near Luoyang by Emperor Ming, a place where Buddhist monks could settle down and translate Buddhist scriptures. It is the first Buddhist monastery in China and is still in existence today.

After arriving in China, Buddhism experienced a long period of interaction with two Chinese major schools of thoughts—Confucianism and Taoism. By the seventh century, Huineng (638–713), a Buddhist monk, founded Chinese Zen Buddhism based on traditional Chinese culture, and sinicized Buddhism in the aspects of mind and doctrine, self-cultivation, and attainment of Buddhahood. Zen Buddhism's formation marked the complete sinicization of Buddhism in China.

Today, few Chinese point out that Buddhism is a foreign culture for China. In fact, over the past 2,000 years, Buddhism has merged into Chinese culture. The acceptance and localization of Buddhism by Chinese culture is a classic example of cultural integration in human history.

Buddhist culture in China has created many world-class cultural landscapes. There are three famous grottoes in the north of China: the Dunhuang Grottoes were excavated in the fourth century, and Yungang and Longman Grottoes in the fifth century. These grottoes have been listed on UNESCO's World Heritage

List. The Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing also made it on the list. It was excavated in the ninth century and completed 250 years later.

In China, there are Buddhist sites that represents the four Bodhisattvas of "great compassion," "great wisdom," "great vow," and "great practice." The four famous Buddhist mountains of China are: Putuo Mountain in Zhejiang is the Buddhist site of Guanyin Bodhisattva with "great compassion"; Wutai Mountain in Shanxi is the Buddhist site of Manjusri Bodhisattva with "boundless wisdom"; Jiuhua Mountain in Anhui is the Buddhist site of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, who claimed that "Not until all the hells are emptied will I become a Buddha"; Emei Mountain in Sichuan is the Buddhist site of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva with "great courage and practice." Many Buddhists in China regard pilgrimages to the four famous mountains as their most sacred wish.

In China, current monasteries follow the system of selecting and appointing capable administrators based on democratic consultation. Buddhist monks in a monastery elect an abbot to manage monastery affairs. The tenure of the abbot is three years and the abbot can be re-elected. Monks have to be dressed in monastic robes, eat a vegetarian diet, remain celibate and not marry, and strictly follow religious disciplines and Buddhist etiquette. Buddhist monks should chant Buddhist scriptures in the morning and evening, learn scriptures by heart, and keep practicing Buddhist rules.

Buddhist rites and prayers being conducted in Tanzhesi Monastery, Beijing.

Shaolin Monastery is the most influential Chinese monastery in the world. At the mention of Chinese *kungfu*, Shaolin Monastery comes to mind. This ancient monastery was built in 495, which has become a symbol of Chinese martial arts. At the initial stage of its establishment, Shaolin Monastery, the cradle of Chinese Zen Buddhism, accepted Chinese martial arts as part of the monks' daily life, and included it as part of scripture learning and self-cultivation. Fighting and martial arts is an extreme form of self-cultivation, since Buddhism advocates peace. However, Chinese Zen Buddhism founded the innate philosophy that no extremes can withhold for long. It discovered the combination of dynamic and static extremes, and the paramount truth beyond fighting and universal fraternity—the most contradictory thing for philosophy to transcend contradiction. This can be regarded as the mysterious great wisdom of Buddhism in China.

Since the 1980s, China has experienced an unprecedented upsurge in Buddhism. It is difficult to get an accurate figure of the number of Buddhists in China, but it is obvious that more devotees are going to Buddhist monasteries and offering more incense. So, we can easily estimate how fast the population of Buddhists in China is growing presently.

The Chinese government holds a positive attitude toward the development of Buddhism. China has held two large-scale World Buddhist Forums. In October 2004, when the seventh Buddhist Friendship Exchange Conference was co-organized in China, South Korea and Japan, a decision was made in Beijing by eight Buddhist leaders from these three countries across the Strait: to hold a World Buddhist Forum in China to improve the quality of life, purify the mind, enlighten people, and maintain peace. The planned forum was targeted at Buddhist disciples as well as spiritual friends who care for and respect Buddhism. On April 13, 2006, senior monks from 37 countries and regions attended the First World Buddhism Forum. Three years later, the Second World Buddhist Forum was held on March 28, 2009, attracting more than 1,700 senior Buddhist monks from about 50 countries and regions.

Tibetan Buddhism

In the seventh century, Buddhism arrived in Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism gradually took shape through its interactions with the local Bon religion in Tibet. In the thirteenth century, Kublai Khan, the emperor of Yuan Dynasty (reigned 1260–1294), honored Basiba (1235–1280) as Royal Preceptor, and began to establish the governance system of alliance between Tibetan Buddhism and state in Tibet. By the end of the fourteenth century, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) founded the Gelug school, which gradually became the most dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism. The monks of the Gelug school have been traditionally known as the "Yellow Hats," because of the color of their

ceremonial headdress. The other main schools of Tibetan Buddhism are the Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu.

Under the system of alliance between Tibetan Buddhism and state, monasteries in Tibet have abundant production materials and wealth, and most of the senior monks are government officials at different levels. Monasteries also have courts and prisons.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government carried out democratic reform in Tibet from 1959 to 1960, which abolished the serfdom of alliance between Tibetan Buddhism and state. However, democratic reforms in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were only restricted to the abolishment of unreasonable traditional regulations. For example, monasteries are not allowed to interfere in the areas of administration, justice and marriage; monasteries are not allowed to appoint officials and establish courts and prisons without permission; people's personal bondage to monasteries are abolished; behaviors such as practicing usury and apportioning duties are forbidden in monasteries; the hierarchical management system in monasteries and the affiliation between the parent and subsidiary monasteries are repealed; Buddhist monks could establish committees or groups responsible for democratic management with regards to religious affairs on their own through democratic elections. The country fully respects and protects the religious freedom of Tibetan citizens.

Lamas enjoying a lively debate on the Buddhist scriptures.

Tibetan Buddhism was introduced to the Mongol minority at the end of the sixteenth century, which made a tremendous impact on Mongolian society. In addition, Tibetan Buddhism also spread to the Monba, Tu, Qiang, and Yugur minorities, whose people converted to Tibetan Buddhism too.

Tibetan Buddhism now has more than 3,000 monasteries, 120,000 monks and nuns, and over 1,700 Living Buddhas. The historic Lhasa Jokhang Monastery was listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2000. The Gelug School has six famous monasteries; Ganden Monastery, Sera Monastery, and Drepung Monastery are all located in Lhasa, as well as Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, Kumbum Monastery in Qinghai, and Labrang Monastery in Gansu. In inland China, Yonghe Temple (also known as the Palace of Peace and Harmony Lama Temple) in Beijing, and Puning Temple (also known as Temple of Universal Peace) in Chengde, Hebei, are important Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.

The reincarnation of the Living Buddha is a system adopted by Tibetan Buddhist monasteries to resolve the problem of leadership succession. It was first created by the Karma Kagyu school in the thirteenth century and then gradually accepted by other schools.

The Living Buddha is identified through a strict set of procedures. Before his death, a Living Buddha always predicts the place where his soul is reincarnated in a baby boy; if not, Buddhist monks will need to get inspiration through divination and séances.

According to clues provided in the Living Buddha's last words, indications, signs, oracles, and mirages on the lake, monasteries with the lineage of the Living Buddha send monks to different destinations, searching for children with signs or behavior of the reincarnated Living Buddha. There may be more than one candidate for the Living Buddha, but only one is selected eventually.

The Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are two Living Buddhas with the highest positions in the Gelug school. In 1653, the Fifth Dalai Lama was conferred a title by the central government of the Qing Dynasty. After that, it became a rule that every reincarnation of the Dalai Lama was bestowed a title by successive imperial courts. In 1713, the imperial court of the Qing Dynasty offered a title to the Fifth Panchen Lama. Since then, every reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was honored by either the imperial courts or central governments.

In Tibet's history, *Chuizhong* (the lama that protects and maintains the Buddhist dharma) was once in charge of identifying the Living Buddha by casting a spell and asking the gods at a séance. However, some of them engaged in frauds, and as a result, many of the "reincarnated" Living Buddhas came from royal and aristocratic families, thus religious power was manipulated by the upper nobilities or senior lamas. In 1793, the government of the Qing Dynasty issued regulations that created a selection system of drawing lots from

a golden urn. The balloting went this way: each ivory strip was engraved with the name and birthday of each candidate and deposited into a golden urn. The ivory strip was then drawn and identified as the "reincarnated" Living Buddha, under the supervision of representatives of the Qing government. In addition, two urns were specially designed for this method: one was used to select the "reincarnated" Living Buddhas for Tibet, such as the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, and is currently housed in the Potala Palace; the other is used for the selection of the Living Buddha in the Mongolian area, which is now housed in the Yonghe Temple in Beijing. Since then, the system of drawing lots from the golden urn became a rule and remains in use till today.

On January 28, 1989, the 10th Panchen Lama passed away in Tibet. The Chinese government announced a mission to locate and identify the "reincarnated" Living Buddha according to historical conventions and etiquettes of Tibetan Buddhism. It took six years to search for candidates and three children were selected. On November 29, 1995, after drawing lots, Gyancain Norbu, a six-year-old boy, was confirmed as the 11th Panchen Lama.

Pali Buddhism

Pali Buddhism is also known as Hinayana Buddhism or Theravada Buddhism. Around the seventh century, Theravada Buddhism was introduced into Yunnan Province. The religion first exerted influence on the Dai minority in Xishuangbanna and Dehong, which made every member of the Dai minority a Theravada Buddhist. After that, Theravada Buddhism gradually spread among the Blang, Achang, and De'ang minorities, converting them to Buddhism.

The Dai minority has fully integrated Theravada Buddhism into their daily lives. In almost every Dai village, there are solemn and peaceful monasteries as well as beautiful white pagodas. The Dai people once wrote Buddhist scriptures on patra leaves in the ancient Dai language, leaving behind a precious cultural heritage. Historically, monastic education is an important form of education for the Dai minority. When a boy reaches the age of seven or eight, he must be ordained as a monk in Buddhist monasteries and study Buddhist scriptures as well as secular culture. After a period of study, ranging from several months to years, most of them resume secular life, while the others remain as monks in Buddhist monasteries.

The Blang, De'ang, and Achang minorities are all pious believers in Theravada Buddhism although they have their own ancient style of worship. In the villages of the Blang and De'ang minorities, Buddhist monasteries and pagodas are everywhere.

Currently, in China, Pali Buddhism has nearly 10,000 bhikshus and elders, and more than 1,600 Buddhist monasteries.

Monks of the Dai minority conducting a religious activity.

Taoism

Lao-Tzu (about 580–500 B.C.) was revered as the father of Taoism for his contribution to later Taoism. His concepts laid the foundation of Taoism. Distinctions should be made between Taoism, which was established in the second century and the Taoist philosophy of Lao-Tzu. However, Lao-Tzu wrote the Taoist classic *Tao Te Ching* that was fully embraced by successive elders of Taoism in later ages.

The Taoist societies of "Everlasting Peace" and "Five Buckets of Rice" in the Eastern Han Dynasty marked the start of Taoism. Also, the publication of these Taoist books; *Tai Ping Doctrines*, *Zhouyi Cantong Qi* and *Lao-Tzu Xiang'er Zhu*, initiated the maturing and formation of Taoist belief and theories. Most Chinese scholars tend to believe that, although Taoist doctrines contain shades of Lao-Tzu's thoughts, it is far from representative of the spirit of Taoism and Lao-Tzu.

The beliefs of Taoism are

- *Tao* is the essence of everything in the universe;
- *Tao* is the ultimate reality, a presence that existed before the universe was formed and continues to guide the world and everything in it;
- society and humans should follow the way of the *Tao*;
- if humans follow the rules of *Tao* and concentrate on self-cultivation, they can eventually achieve peace of mind, improve their health, eliminate diseases, prolong their lives, and even become immortals.

The Baopu Taoist Temple in Hangzhou, Zhejiang.

The utmost goal of Taoism is to achieve immortality through self-cultivation.

Many religious doctrines believe that life is full of pain. However, life is a source of joy for Taoists, and they encourage others to enjoy their lives. Therefore, Taoism developed many mystical methods of self-cultivation, such as spiritual, dietary, breathing, and physical practices, among which the most amazing one is *Dan Tao*.

Dan Tao includes external *Dan* and internal *Dan*. The former refers to pills of immortality made by Taoists by smelting minerals like cinnabar and lead in stoves and bronze urns. This cultivation method reached its zenith in the Tang Dynasty, followed by a gradual decline, and was replaced by internal *Dan*. The latter refers to Taoists using their bodies as a form of "stoves and bronze urns," through deep breathing to gather and convert energy (*qi*) into pills of immortality within their bodies; once this is carrid out successfully, devout Taoists would eventually become immortals.

It does not matter whether immortals exist by the method of external *Dan* or internal *Dan*, but it is undeniable that external *Dan* and internal *Dan* have made unexpected contributions to Chinese culture. External *Dan* resulted in the achievements in metallurgy and chemistry in China, even leading to the invention of gunpowder. While internal *Dan* has greatly

A Taoist rite in White Cloud Temple, Beijing.

contributed to medical knowledge in China. For instance, the practice of *qigong* (a breathing exercise), which benefits people's health, is very popular in China today and other countries.

The "paradise" that Taoists yearn for, does not entirely refer to an imaginary heaven because it also exists on earth. On earth, lands governed by gods are known as *Dongtianfudi* (literally heavenly caves and lands of happiness). Taoism points out that there are 10 major heavenly caves, 36 minor heavenly caves, and 72 lands of happiness in China. These are all located at famous mountains and rivers, where many historical Taoist temples are located. Some are even historical sites where legendary Taoist immortals practiced their self-cultivation. Nowadays, these scenic spots of high heritage value have become popular destinations for Chinese tourists. Some of the scenic spots have been listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, such as Qingcheng Mountain in Sichuan (also known as the "Fifth Heavenly Cave"), Wuyi Mountain in Fujian (also known as the "16th Heavenly Cave"), Wudang Mountain in Hubei (also known as the "Ninth Land of Happiness"), and Mount Lu in Jiangxi (also known as the "71st Land of Happiness").

A Taoist priest is one who conducts Taoist rites and activities in a Taoist temple. In the twelfth century, after the rise of the famous Quanzhen school in

Taoism, Taoist temples began to use the best practices of temple management of Buddhist monasteries.

The Chinese Taoist Association was founded in 1957. It is located in the White Cloud Temple in Beijing. It was the first Chinese Taoist association that included all schools of Taoism. In addition, there are 133 Taoist organizations of various sizes throughout China. In 1990, the Chinese Taoist Association set up the Chinese Taoist Academy, the first nationwide academy devoted to the study of Chinese Taoism.

Islam

The open and liberal character of the great Tang Dynasty encouraged a lot of foreign merchants to trade with China. Due to their advanced maritime technology, more than 70 foreign countries traded with China during this period. At that time, a large number of Arabian and Persian merchants came to China. Attracted by the prosperous economy and tolerant atmosphere of politics and culture, some of them remained in China, married and had children, and worked for the imperial court after passing the imperial examinations. These Arabian and Persian merchants, known as *Fanke* (literally foreign guests) in China, were the first group of people that brought Islam to China.

The second crucial stage of the spread and development of Islam in China was during the Yuan Dynasty. For 50 years since the start of the thirteenth century, during the large-scale westward expansion by the Mongols, a group of Arabs, Persians, and Central Asians were conscripted for the war against China during the Song Dynasty. These people, together with the descendants of the Arabs and Persians are known as the Huihui.

As the Huihui people lived together and has a long history of intermarriage with the Han Chinese and Mongolians, by late Yuan and early Ming dynasties, a new ethnic group had finally been formed; the Hui ethnic minority. The formation of the Hui ethnic minority laid a stable social foundation for the spread of Islam in China. Meanwhile, this also indicated that Muslims were no longer immigrants, and after living in China for as long as 700 to 800 years, their descendants became native Chinese ethnic minorities. This also transformed Islam from a foreign religion into one that was rooted in China and became an important part of Chinese culture.

Chinese language is commonly used by the Hui ethnic minority, while Arabic and Persian languages are usually used in religious activities. As to when and how these Muslims stopped speaking their mother tongues, some scholars explain that because there were few women among merchants and soldiers, they had to marry local women of Han Chinese ethnicity in order to have children.

A mosque in Kashi, Xinjiang.

Then, the children of the Hui ethnic minority gradually became more familiar with their mothers' language of Chinese, as it was passed down from mother to child, so later generations of the Hui ethnic minority eventually adopted it for daily use. Furthermore, they mastered Chinese for the purpose of trading. In fact, the Hui ethnic minority integrated Islamic ethics with the traditional Chinese concept of "respect for God and ancestors" in the aspects of ethics and code of conduct. As for the religious education system, the Hui ethnic minority combined Islamic monastic education with Chinese traditional private schooling, which forms the unique "Mosque Education" in Chinese Islam.

The Sinicization of Islam made further progress during the Qing Dynasty: some scholars not only explained Islamic doctrines, disciplines, decrees, and regulations in the Chinese language, but also dedicated themselves to the combination of Confucian and Islamic doctrines. During the same period, Chinese Islam evolved into different Islamic schools with Chinese characteristics and also the Menhuan system. Menhuan was the product of Islamic mysticism (also known as Sufism) and the patriarchal system in China. Furthermore, mosque architecture at that time began to adopt the style of traditional Chinese architectures. In addition, Chinese Muslim families started assimilating traditional Chinese etiquette and habits in their daily lives.

Islam arrived in Xinjiang as early as the tenth century. Prior to her arrival, the ethnic groups were all pious believers of Buddhism, which had

a history of more than 1,000 years in Xinjiang. Around A.D. 1 of the Gregorian calendar, Xinjiang was a crucial route along the Silk Road, hence many important religions in the world, including Shamanism, Manichaeism, Nestorianism, and Zoroastrianism were found there. The Uygur people used to be believers of the above-mentioned religions, as well as Buddhism. After the spread of Islam for more than four centuries and the Islamic holy war against Buddhism, Islam was finally accepted by the Uygur ethnic minority. Islam was only accepted by other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang from the eighteenth century onwards.

There are 10 main Muslim ethnic groups in China. Besides the Hui and Uygur ethnic minorities, they also include the Kazak, Kirgiz, Ozbek, Tatar, and Tajik ethnic minorities in Xinjiang; the Salar ethnic minority in Qinghai Province; the Dongxiang and Baoan ethnic minorities in Gansu Province.

Currently, there are over 34,000 mosques and 20 million Muslims in China. This indicates that there is a mosque for every 600 Muslims in China. Many of these mosques were either restored or built in the 1980s.

The Islamic Association of China was founded in Beijing in 1953, serving as the nation's main religious organization for Islam. The association's

An Iman preaching Islamic doctrines.

magazine, *Chinese Muslims*, is published in both the Chinese and Uygur languages. Some provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities where Muslims live, also have their own Islamic associations as well as local publications. China has since published the *Koran* in 10 languages to meet the needs of Muslim readers among various ethnic groups.

Currently, China has 11 Islamic academies for mosque education. China Islamic Institute, founded in Beijing in 1955, is the highest institution of learning in Chinese Islam.

Catholicism

In 1294, the Franciscan missionary John of Montecorvino (1247–1328) arrived in the capital (Dadu, now known as Beijing) of the Yuan Dynasty and received the government's permission to establish Catholic churches. This marked the introduction of Catholicism into China. However, with the fall of the Yuan Dynasty, Catholicism withered away in the country.

In the sixteenth century, with the expansion of Western colonialism, Catholicism re-entered China. During this period, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), an Italian Jesuit missionary, laid the foundation for Catholicism in China.

Many Chinese view Matteo Ricci as an important figure in the cultural interaction between the East and the West, rather than as a Catholic missionary. His huge success in China was due to his flexibility in adapting to Chinese culture.

Before setting foot on mainland China, Ricci first learned Chinese in Macau. In 1583, he arrived in Guangdong, where he made friends with Chinese officials and scholars. His daily life became localized. He once shaved his head, wore the monastic robes, and called himself a "Western monk." Later, he took off his cassock, let his beard and hair grow, and wore Han Chinese clothing. Through this change, he discovered that Confucianism really dominated China. Thus, he began to study Confucian teachings, and even translated Confucian classics, attempting to reconcile Confucianism with Catholicism.

Although people speak highly of Ricci, his main aim was still to spread Catholicism in China. In 1601, Ricci visited Beijing, and was received by the emperor. Ricci's extensive knowledge won the respect and appreciation of the emperor. He received the emperor's permission to do missionary work, and was granted an official position in the Ming Dynasty. Thereafter, Catholicism secured a place in China.

By the time Ricci passed away in 1610 in China, there had been more than 2,000 baptized Catholics in the country. In 1637, China had over 40,000 Catholics. The Vatican decided to install a Vicar Apostolic in China, entrusting

missionaries from Spain, France, and Italy with missionary districts in China. These three colonial empires struggled fiercely for missionary influence in China.

Tributes paid to Confucius and ancestors are Chinese traditions with a long-standing history. Ricci had once proposed to adapt such a practice in China. However, after Spanish and French missionary organizations entered China, a heated debate over whether to tolerate this practice began. It became known as the "Chinese Rites Controversy" in the history of Catholicism. After swaying between the two opinions, the Vatican eventually forbade Chinese Catholics to practice traditional Chinese rites and sent special envoys to implement that decree.

This move caused the Catholic Church to lose the support of many intellectuals in China, and widened the gap particularly between the Chinese elite and Catholicism. Owing to the Vatican's negative attitude toward Chinese rites, Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (reigned 1662–1722) imposed a ban on Catholicism in China, which lasted for more than 100 years.

When the Opium War broke out in 1840, Western powers used gunboats to open up China. Soon after that, the Chinese government was forced to sign a series of unequal treaties and repeal her ban against Catholicism. The 1860

A Catholic church in Wangfujing, Beijing.

Sino-France Beijing Treaty stipulated that the Qing government should return and compensate previously seized Catholic property. A French missionary serving as a translator added an article to the treaty without permission in the process of translation, which stated that "French missionaries are allowed to rent or purchase land, and construct estates as they wish." This treaty indicated that France had gained a political privilege that gave an all-rounded protection to Catholicism. Meanwhile, after more than 10 years of diplomatic negotiations, the Vatican and the government of Portugal finally reached an agreement to turn the mission fields in Beijing and Nanjing that once was under Portugal patronage into French mission fields. After the 1880s, German and Italy, through military powers, also gained the same privilege from the Chinese government.

During this period, Catholic missionaries relied on colonial forces to acquire political privileges enjoyed by the dukes of medieval churches, which had long been abolished in Western Europe. In 1899, the Qing government was forced to issue "Rules for Reception of Missionaries by Local Officials," officially admitting that Catholic Bishops enjoyed a political status equivalent to that of a governor-general and inspector-general; the General Secretary of the Church was equivalent to the status of the *Sidao* (literally Governor's Office); while missionaries were the equivalent of state and county officials.

During the same period, conflicts arose between Catholicism and the Chinese society. The main reasons were that some missionaries purchased or took possession of land by force; some viewed themselves as war victors, and interfered with local government affairs and laws. Under these circumstances, the Boxer Uprising broke out on a grand scale, and later swept across the northern provinces in China. The Boxer Uprising was an anti-imperialist and patriotic movement started by Chinese farmers who formed the bulk of the Boxers. It was also a phenomenon of the accumulated conflicts between Catholicism, Protestantism, and the Chinese during the last half century. This movement made the Catholic Church aware of its own problems. The Vatican began to ban missionaries from interfering in the litigations of Chinese Catholics, and churches were ordered to refrain from intervening in political and diplomatic activities. Meanwhile, the Vatican began enhancing its social influence by running schools, practicing medicine, and participating in charities. From then on, Catholicism grew at a faster speed in China. By 1949, there were 3.18 million Catholics in China.

Unfortunately, the Vatican refused to accept the newly-founded People's Republic of China. Some members of the Catholic Church took an anti-communist stance and forbade followers from joining any organizations led by the Chinese government. Others even collected information about China under the cover of priests.

A consecration ceremony for seminarians in the National Seminary of the Catholic Church in China.

Under such circumstances, in November 1950, 500 Catholics and the Chinese priest Wang Liangzuo from Guangyuan County, Sichuan Province, issued the "Three Self-Declarations" calling for a Catholic Church that is self-governed, self-supported, and self-propagated. This appeal aroused much heated discussions among Chinese Catholics, but shortly afterward, the Catholics in other regions of China began releasing similar statements. In 1957, the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association was founded.

The resolution adopted by the First Catholic Congress stated: "To maintain a purely religious relationship with the Vatican City on the premise that, no one violates the interests and independent dignity of the country; to obey the Pope's teachings that are creditable and practical; and to cut off political and economic ties with the Vatican City."

Around 1949, many missionaries left mainland China willingly, while some were deported for anti-China activities. There were only 20 bishops left in 137 mission fields nationwide, which greatly hindered the religious development of Catholic activities in China. In March 1958, the Hankou and Wuchang mission fields in Hubei selected Dong Guangqing (1917–2007) and Yuan Wenhua (1905–1973) as bishop candidates, and asked for the Vatican's approval for the consecration date by telegram. However, the Vatican sent a reply saying that selection not done by the Vatican was invalid; due to whatever ritual or status, if a bishop consecrates another "bishop" without the nomination or approval of the Holy See, consecrators and consecratees were both subject to "super-excommunication."

The Chinese Catholic Church was stuck in a dilemma: the Vatican's ban on the one hand, and the needs of Chinese Catholics for a normal religious life on

the other hand. It had no choice but to select and consecrate bishops by themselves. This method was determined then and has continued to this day.

Although the Catholic Church in China adheres to the principle of independence, self-management does not mean that it refuses all contact and communication with Catholic churches around the world. In fact, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, especially with the reform and opening up, the Chinese Catholic Bishops College and mission fields throughout the country have received a large number of Catholic clergies from around the world, among whom are many well-known religious leaders. In return, the Chinese Catholic Church has also received invitations to visit Catholic churches all over the world, and to attend events such as the "World Conference on Religion and Peace."

Currently, the number of Catholics in China has increased from three to five million since 1949. In 1983, the Chinese Catholic Academy of Theology and Philosophy was established. It is a national Roman Catholic seminary under the direct management of the Chinese Catholic Bishops College, with a six-year school system, serving as the highest institution of Catholicism in China and also functions as a theological research center.

Protestantism

The British missionary, Robert Morrison (1782–1834), arrived in China in 1807, marking China's first encounter with Protestantism. Due to the Qing government's ban on the spread of Catholicism and Protestantism, Morrison and other missionaries who arrived in China after the ban could only do missionary work in secrecy along the southeastern coastal areas.

The Opium War in 1840 opened China's doors to the rest of the world. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were about 1,500 Protestant missionaries and around 80,000 followers in China.

Protestantism entered China together with the colonial invasion of Western powers. Therefore, many Chinese linked the spread of Protestantism with the country's decline and fall, betrayal and humiliation. Jiang Menglin (1886–1964), the President of Peking University in the 1920s, provided an explanation: "When a religion is connected with military power, its image will definitely be changed. And when it comes to Protestantism, it is inevitable for people to link it to intimidation. Gradually, people got the idea that Tathagata came to China by riding on a white elephant, while Jesus Christ flew to China on artillery shells."

Under the protection of unequal treaties, some Protestant missionaries had nothing to fear in China. That belief frequently led to conflicts and disputes between the populace and Western missionaries, which was historically

known as a "church case." From 1840 to 1900, there were more than 400 "church cases" all over China. Various "church cases" became an excuse for Western powers to make further demands to the Qing government and even wage a war of aggression that led to the Boxer Uprising. With large-scale bloody conflicts, the Protestant Church suffered a serious setback in China, forcing Protestants to tone down their behavior. Some missionaries began to realize that missionary methods should be reformed to reduce the Chinese people's resentment and resistance to foreign missionaries. They decided to change tack and started schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions instead of preaching to people directly.

While the Western missionaries started their new missionary strategy, China was entering a new era where the decline of the country caused profound cultural reflections. It became a major cause in society that in order to save the nation from doom, Chinese people strove for self-support and innovation, and accepted Western culture either consciously or unconsciously. This was a golden opportunity to spread Protestantism.

By 1922, the number of Protestants in China had increased to about 400,000, and by 1949, there were almost 700,000 believers. The Protestant Church not only delivered sermons in China's large cities, but also established churches in remote and rural places. Meanwhile, it continued with the

Shanghai International Chapel was built in 1920 in Hengshan. It is the largest Protestant church in Shanghai.

"Self-Support" and "Indigenization" movements. The "Self-Support" movement started from the 1870s, a time when the development of Protestantism was hindered, so this became a concern for some people in Chinese Protestant churches. They were keen in establishing an independent Protestant Church with Chinese characteristics. Through which, they hope to change the Chinese people's impression of Protestantism as a "foreign religion."

In the beginning, the "Self-Support" movement was merely a one-off spontaneous action by some Chinese Protestants. However, by the twentieth century, it had developed into a church movement. In 1922, the National Christian Conference of China was held in Shanghai, which set up a national organization—the National Christian Council of China. This organization put forth the slogan of establishing an indigenous church, and advocated that followers in China should assume responsibilities and promote traditional Chinese culture in order to remove the title of "foreign religion" from Protestantism.

The "Indigenization" movement of Chinese Protestants aimed to make Protestantism indigenous. It was characterized by the following: opposing total Westernization; advocating the combination of traditional Chinese culture with Christian doctrines, organizations, and rites; advancing the inherent Chinese culture while maintaining a certain degree of cooperation with the Western Church.

In reality, it was not easy to assimilate Protestantism into Chinese culture. After proposing the "Indigenization" movement, Chinese Protestants made efforts by adopting the architectural style of Chinese temples when constructing churches and singing hymns in folk tunes. Obviously, that was only integration in form as people were still uncertain about the means of integrating Protestantism into the essence of Chinese culture.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, although she advocated religious freedom, many religious followers still held a skeptical attitude and sensed gloomy prospects due to anti-communist propaganda by some foreign missionaries. During this time, some farsighted members of Protestant churches realized that by purging the past influence and effects of Western powers, undergo a complete self-transformation to match the evolving Chinese society, could the churches break new grounds in missionary work.

For this reason, 40 leading figures from various Christian denominations headed by Wu Yaozong (1893–1979), declared *The Plan for Chinese Christianity to Support New China's Nation-Building* on September 23, 1950. It requested all Chinese Protestants to achieve the dictum of the "Three-Self" (i.e., self-governance, self-support and self-propagation) of Chinese churches as soon as possible. That marked the start of the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China."

The declaration was met with enthusiastic responses from patriotic Protestants. By 1954, more than 410,000 followers had signed up to uphold the declaration, accounting for two-thirds of the total number of Protestants in China.

In 1954, the First National Conference of the Chinese Christian Church was held in Beijing. It established the National Committee of the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China" with Wu Yaozong as the chairman. The "Three-Self Movement," to some extent, marked China's Protestantism's metamorphosis from a foreign to a local religion.

Protestant churches in China have sought self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation, but this does not mean self-isolation. For more than 50 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese Protestant churches have established formal relationships with Protestant organizations from other countries. They have hosted overseas visiting groups, organized delegations for

Students from Nanjing Union Theological Seminary singing hymns.

visits abroad, and attended international conferences of Protestantism. In 1991, the China Christian Council officially joined the World Council of Churches.

After the reform and opening up, Protestantism grew exponentially. In 1979, there were more than three million followers, and by 2002, the number had surged to over 16 million and there were close to 50,000 Protestant churches in China.

It was once reported by the foreign media that there was an acute shortage of *The Holy Bible* in China. In fact, from 1988 to the end of 2002, China published 30 million Bibles in various languages, such as Chinese, English, Korean, as well as the Miao, Jingpo, Lahu, Kawa, Lisu, and Yi languages. In some ethnic regions, most Bibles are given to followers free of charge. The Nanjing Amity Development Co., Ltd. specializes in printing *The Holy Bible*. It is a joint venture started in 1987 between the United Bible Societies and the Amity Foundation.

Apart from the National Committee of the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China," the China Christian Council, founded in 1980, is another nationwide Protestant organization. These two organizations are located in Shanghai. Throughout China, there are more than 1,700 local "three-self" patriotic associations and Protestant associations.

In China, there are 17 Christian theological seminaries. Established in 1952, the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary is a nationwide theological seminary.

The Policy of Religious Freedom in China

In a country governed by an atheist party, can theistic religions be tolerated and accepted? Generally speaking, current religious policies in China mainly include the following characteristics:

(1) Citizens enjoy the freedom of religious beliefs. One has the right to believe in any religion out of his/her own free will, to express one's own religious belief and religious identity.

(2) The country follows the principle of separating religion from the state. No religion is allowed to interfere in government administrative and judicial systems; the government is not allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of religions, and no single religion is granted a special position.

(3) Religious organizations must act within the scope of the State Constitution as well as the relevant laws and policies. When exercising the right of religious freedom, no individual should use religion as a pretext for doing harm to the country, society, and individuals. The country protects

religious activities in line with the State Constitution, relevant laws, and policies. The country protects the legitimate rights and interests of religious organizations as well as the rights of professional religious personnel performing religious duties.

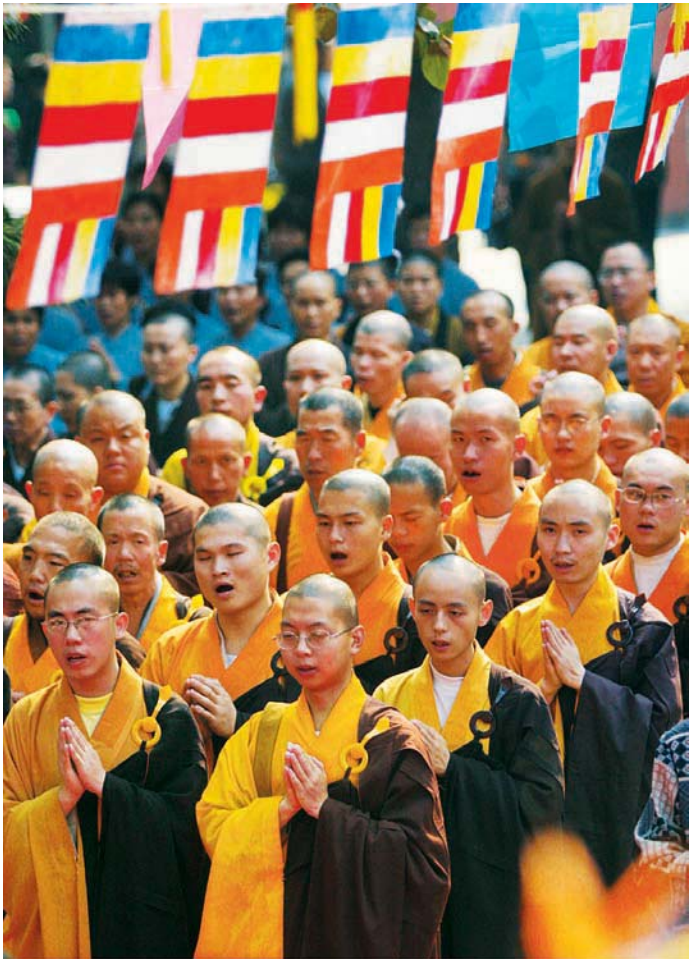
(4) All religions are equal. The government provides equal treatment to all religions; all religions are politically and legally equal regardless of the number of believers and influence.

(5) Mutual respect should be built between atheism and theism. In China, as non-believers are the majority, the government stipulates that religious activities should be carried out only in religious venues. No individual is

Religious leaders attending the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

permitted to conduct atheist propaganda in religious venues, or to launch a debate on theism and atheism among religious believers; no religious organization is allowed to conduct a sermon, preach, and publicize theism beyond religious venues.

(6) All religions in China shall follow the principles of independence and self-management, and shall develop mutual exchanges and cooperation with overseas religious organizations and personages on the basis of equality and friendliness. The country does not allow foreign countries to interfere in China's internal affairs in the name of religion.



September 2003 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Buddhist Association of China. The celebration was held in Beijing.

Story of Bingzhongluo: Religious Harmony in Contemporary Society

Bingzhongluo[1] is located in the upper reaches of the Nujiang River, where A-Nong, a branch of the Nu ethnic minority, thrives here. Due to migration by the Tibetan and Lisu ethnic minorities from the north and south, respectively, the A-Nong people gradually had neighbors and relatives from these two ethnic groups. They purchased Lisu ironware and Tibetan butter buckets and meanwhile added the supernatural beliefs of Lisu folklore and Tibetan Buddhism to their primitive beliefs. In modern times, Catholicism and Protestantism in the Western world entered China consecutively. After experiencing a series of painful experiences, the A-Nong people received "Mary" and "Jesus" into their lives.

He Lin is a doctor working in a research institute of ethnic minorities at Yunnan University as well as in a research center for ethnic minorities in southwest China. In 2005, He Lin stayed for a year in a A-Nong village. After some time, he made in-depth observations and research on a phenomenon—the peaceful coexistence among ethnic minorities of different religious beliefs in Yunnan.

The following is his story about Bingzhongluo:

A Buddhist temple in the countryside of Yunnan.

[1] *Bijionglo* in Tibetan pronunciation and *Manbiekong* in A-Nong pronunciation.

Peach blossoms are blooming during springtime in Bingzhongluo. Ancient lamaseries, Protestant churches and Catholic churches are located no more than one kilometer away from each other. During each religion's festivals, the winding mountain paths are full of well-dressed people, including the A-Nong, Tibetan, and Lisu people. In the Shuangla village of Bingzhongluo, there is a Protestant church and a Catholic church. They are sited opposite each other and separated by a river; while a *Songdebu*[2] is near the stone houses surrounded by barley fields, a clear indication of the homeowner's religious beliefs. However, it may not be completely correct to judge the religion of a household just by the *Songdebu* and the holy Lama's symbol on the house, a cross painted on the door, or a Madonna statue placed in the house. This is because you may see two or more of the above religious symbols in many households. Sometimes, you may not see any of these symbols in a household because its family members may have different religious beliefs.

If people describe the paradise in their hearts as a "harmonious coexistence between human and nature," then in the paradise of the A-Nong people, there is still mutual tolerance and harmony among the relationships between humans, between human and god, and between the gods. People are curious how a "harmonious coexistence" among different religions and among different ethnic minorities can be achieved.

At the end of 2004, Bingzhongluo had a population of 6,205, among which there were 3,159 A-Nong people, 2,027 Lisu people, 520 Tibetan people and 305 Dulong people. The number of religious believers was 3,887, accounting for 63% of the total population.

Calling themselves "A-Nong," these people actually belong to the Nu ethnic minority. People of the Nu ethnic minority were ancient inhabitants in the areas around the Nujiang River and hence were named after this river. The A-Nong people speak their own language and do not have a written language, but almost all the people there understand the Lisu and Tibetan languages. And increasingly, the A-Nong people are becoming proficient in the Chinese language.

Tibetan Buddhism entered Bingzhongluo in 1733 and soon became the dominant religion. In 1889, Catholicism was introduced by the French missionaries. At that time, the spread of Catholicism triggered a violent religious conflict. Due to repression from the Qing government and the then Western imperialist powers, Catholicism finally gained a foothold. Christianity was introduced in 1930 by American missionaries and it spread very fast.

So, how do the A-Nong people view the different religions in their village?

Historically, the A-Nong people used legends to explain their relations with the Lisu, Tibetan, Dulong ethnic minorities, and the Han Chinese who are their

[2]This is where believers of Lamaism offer sacrifices to the Tibetan gods.

neighbors and relatives. According to an ancient legend, these ethnic minorities were all brothers and sisters who were born from the same "Father Moon" and "Mother Sun." Subsequently, the A-Nong people used a new legend to explain the relations among various religions. The new legend was that Tibetan Buddhism, Catholicism, and Christianity are "brothers and sisters of a large family."

> A long, long time ago, the religions of A-Nong were like a family. They came from India, later moved to Tibet and lived at the foot of Mount Kawagebo. There were four children in the family, but they did not get along well. The eldest son went to Jinshajiang River and became Buddhism (Chinese Buddhism). The second son remained in Tibet and became Lamaism (Tibetan Buddhism). Of the two stubborn daughters, one was stuffed into a bag by their mother and thrown into the Lancang River, and later drifted to a place called France. The other was thrown into the Nujiang River and finally reached the United Kingdom. After some time, the two daughters came back: one was Catholicism, who called herself Mary and was later rescued by a Tibetan caravan, and thus Catholicism started her missionary work from the Tibetans. The other sister became Christianity (Protestantism), who drifted to the place where the Lisu people live, and therefore Christianity started spreading from the Lisu ethnic minority.

In this legend, the A-Nong people used family ties to explain the relations among different religions. In addition, they used family scenarios to describe the memories of the conflicts and fights among different religions in the past and to express a desire for a harmonious coexistence for the future.

In Bingzhongluo, Tuesday is market day. People speaking different languages conduct trade, engage in the latest gossips, eat and drink freely among each other. Although they dress in almost the same manner, you can still distinguish their religious beliefs within a short time: a person with a circle of woolen thread (red or multicolored) around his or her neck is likely to be a Tibetan Buddhist; one who does not wear such a thread around his or her neck but is smoking a tobacco pipe or drinking water or alcoholic beverages is likely to be a Catholic; a person, who only consumes soft drinks, is likely to be a Christian.

In fact, the ancient primitive religion of nature worship still exists among the A-Nong people and its priests are called *Nanmusa* (sorcerers).

There is a story of a family with numerous religious beliefs: Zhao Guoqiang's eldest and second sons are Catholics and they go to church every Sunday. His youngest daughter and her husband believe in Tibetan Buddhism, while his wife and a daughter-in-law are Christians, and go to church every Wednesday evening and Sunday. Zhao Guoqiang himself has no religious beliefs, and thus he goes nowhere but stays at home to look after his farm.

Religions in Bingzhongluo are not in contact with one another, and even religious ceremonies between Catholicism and Christianity, have no similarities, even though both are of the same origin. Under such a situation, how can close relationships be established among believers of different religions? Surely,

A 100-year-old Catholic church in Cizhong Village, Deqin County, Yunnan.

in Bingzhongluo, a Christian would not go to a Catholic church nor would a Catholic attend a Protestant Church, nor would a Christian or a Catholic participate in the Lamas' chanting. Catholic priests and Christian pastors in Bingzhongluo all say that they have no religious connections, and no cooperation with regards to Christmas celebrations. However, when the Catholic Church was established there in 1996, congratulatory gifts were sent by the Protestant Church in Shuangla Village—the A-Nong people often congratulate relatives and neighbors in such a manner. This shows that the A-Nong people make a clear distinction between religion and daily life, and nobody likes to meddle in other people's matters.

The A-Nong people would never have two or more than two religious beliefs because they are loyal to their own beliefs. Due to the unforgettable memories of disharmony among the "brothers and sisters" in the legend and a desire for a peaceful life, the A-Nong people are always striving for a harmonious coexistence among different religions.

INDEX

A
Achang people, 21, 80, 135

B
Bai people, 20, 26, 52, 80, 83
Barlow, Augustine, 3
Birth rate, 43–44
Blang people, 21, 135
Bolshevik, 54
Bonan people, 21
Bouyei people, 20, 42, 52
Buddhism
  Chinese, 130–132, 155
  Pali, 135
  Tibetan, 132–135, 153–155

C
Catholicism, 129, 142–143, 146, 153–155
Census
  first, 15, 42
  second, 43
  third, 32, 43
  fourth, 32, 41, 43
  fifth, 32
Central Academy of National Minorities, 49–50, 82, 96
Central Plains, 7–10, 24–26, 71
"China Model", 66–67
Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 54, 84, 151
Christianity. *See* Protestantism
Cold War, The, 51
Common prosperity, 69–71
Communist Party of China, 51, 117
Confucianism, 126, 128
Confucius, 7, 125–126, 143
Cultural coexistence, 69–71
Culturalism, 6–10, 25
Cultural Revolution, 19
Cultural self-identity, 69–71
Cultural tolerance, 69–71

D
Dai people, 20, 72, 74, 79–80, 83–84, 135–136
Dalai Lama, 42, 85, 134–135
Daur people, 21, 39, 42, 59, 80, 101
De'ang people, 21, 135
Demographic indicators, 40–42
Derung people, 22, 80
Djangar, 73
Dong Grand Song, 75–76, 93
Dong people, 16, 20, 52, 74–76, 79–80, 83, 93, 115
Dongxiang people, 20, 141
Du Yuting, 19

E
Economic development, 13, 35, 37, 45, 62, 65, 96, 105–106, 109–110, 117, 120, 122
Education
  bilingual, 101–102
  mainstream, 43
  monastic, 43, 135, 140
The Epic of King Gesar. See *Gesar*
Epic of Manas, 73, 93
Epics, 71–74, 86, 93
Ethnic group, 3–10, 13–22, 24–28, 31–36, 45, 49–52, 54, 56–63, 71–72, 74, 76, 79–80, 82–87, 96, 102, 106, 108, 115, 139–142
Ethnic identification, 15, 17, 19
Ethnic minority, 6–7, 13–17, 19, 22–24, 27–28, 31–46, 49–56, 58–59, 61–63, 65, 69–102, 105–123, 129–130, 139–141, 153–155
Ethnic Press of China, 84–85

Ethnic regional autonomy, 51–52, 54–55, 60–63, 65–67, 99, 101
Ethnic trade policy, 115–116
Ewenki people, 21, 39, 42, 107

F

Fairbank, John King, 7–8
Family planning policy, 36–40, 51
Federalism, 51–55
Fei Xiaotong, 23, 69, 71, 96
Festivals, 7, 17, 63, 66, 72, 80–81, 94, 96, 154
Five-Year Plan, 86
Folk songs (music), 75–77, 80, 87, 93–95

G

Gampo, Sontzen, 78
Gaoshan people, 20, 22, 39, 42
Gelao people, 21, 33, 42
Gelek Lobsang, 26
Gelgamesh, 72
General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), 84
Genghis Khan Memorial, 54
Gesar, 71–73, 86–87, 93

H

Han Chinese, 5, 8, 15, 23–27, 31–32, 36–38, 41–42, 44, 52, 54, 60, 80, 84, 91, 98, 109, 130, 139, 142, 154
Hani people, 18, 20, 42, 80, 83
"Harmony in Diversity", 71
Hebert, Jacques, 49–51
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 71
Hezhen people, 22, 33, 42, 107–108
Hui people, 5, 19, 33–34, 38, 42, 50, 52–53, 57–58, 60, 79, 105, 109, 139–141

I

Iliad, 72–73
Independent ethnic minority economies, 105–123
Intangible cultural heritage, 76–77, 90–93
International Conference of East Asian Studies, 69
International Manas Year, 73
Islam, 129, 139–142

J

Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, 5
Jesus, 146, 153
Jiangbianjiacuo, 85–86
Jiang Menglin, 146
Jing people, 21, 33, 40, 42, 60, 80
Jingpo people, 21, 83, 150
Jino people, 15, 19, 22
John of Montecorvino, 142

K

Kazak people, 20, 42, 58, 80, 84–85, 89, 108, 141
Kirgiz people, 21, 73–74, 84, 93, 108, 141
Korean ethnic minority, 35, 41–42, 70, 81, 84–85, 93, 109
Kublai Khan, 132
Kuomintang, 5

L

Lahu people, 20, 83, 108, 150
Languages
  spoken, 82, 101
  written, 13, 17, 50, 62, 79, 82–84, 101–102, 154
Lao-Tzu, 136
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 126
Lhoba people, 19, 22, 31, 33, 60
Liang Qichao, 5
Li people, 20, 25, 51, 53, 83, 91, 93
Lisu people, 20, 80, 83, 108, 150, 153–155
Living Buddha, 28, 134–135
Living standards, 37, 106
Li Weihan, 53
Longman Grottoes, 130
Long March, 51
A-long people, 155
Luo Changpei, 82

M

Mahabarata, 72
Manchu people, 4–5, 20, 28, 33, 42, 80, 82, 84, 88, 109, 111
Manifesto of the First National Congress, 5
Maonan people, 21, 33, 42

Maxrap, 38
Mao Zedong, 22
Miao people, 5, 17, 19, 33, 52, 57–58, 74, 80–81, 83, 113, 115, 118, 150
Middle Kingdom, 8–9
Mogao Grottoes, 130
Monba people, 22, 60, 134
Mongol ethnic minority, 19, 37, 39, 52, 73, 84, 134
Mongolia, 5, 16, 19–23, 25, 36, 38–39, 51–52, 54, 57, 59, 66, 75–77, 79–80, 84–85, 88, 90, 93, 97, 100, 105–106, 111–112, 115, 117, 119, 121–122, 134–135, 139
Morrison, Robert, 146
Mulam people, 21, 42, 60, 80

N

Naadam, 66
National Agricultural Development Plan, 51
National Family Planning Commission, 37
Nationalism, 3–10
Nationality, 3–10, 85
National People's Congress, 22, 50, 53, 55, 60, 84
National Sports Games for Ethnic Minorities, 89–90
National unity, 56–57, 85
Natural population growth rate, 44
Naxi people, 20, 42, 52, 75, 83, 95–96
Nu people, 21, 108, 153–154

O

Odyssey, 72–73
Opium War, 3, 27, 143, 146
Oroqen people, 22, 35–36, 39, 59, 107
Ozbek people, 21, 35, 42, 141

P

Paired-up assistance, 120–123
Panchen Lama, 85, 135
Pan Guangdan, 17
Plato, 126
Population mobility, 44–46
Population policies, 35–40
Poverty relief, 113–115
Protestantism, 130, 144, 146–150, 153, 155
Pumi people, 21

Q

Qiang people, 21, 24, 26, 33, 52, 58, 80, 92–93, 134, 155

R

Ramayana, 72
Reform and opening up, 6, 19, 44–45, 65, 94, 105, 117, 146, 150
Religious beliefs, 13, 72, 80, 125–156
Religious freedom, 53, 133, 148, 150–152
Ricci, Matteo, 142
Russian ethnic minority, 21, 35, 42, 51

S

Salar people, 21, 58, 100, 141
Seypidin Azizi, 57
She people, 15, 20, 42, 80
Shi Lianzhu, 15
Socialist market economy, 106, 116
Spring and Autumn Annals, 7
Stalin, Iosif Vissarionovich, 15
State Ethnic Affairs Commission, 87, 97
Sui people, 20, 25, 80
Sun Yat-Sen, 4–5

T

Tajik people, 21, 76, 108, 141
Taoism, 126, 129–130, 136–139
Tatar people, 21, 42, 141
Theravada Buddhism. *See* Buddhism, Pali
Tibet, 19, 22, 26, 28, 33, 35, 40, 42–44, 51, 57, 60, 63–65, 78–79, 86–87, 97, 110–112, 115, 118, 120–123, 132–133, 135, 155
Traditional economies, 107
Traditional ethnic medicine, 77
Traditional sports, 89–90
Trudeau, Pierre Elliott, 49, 71
Tujia people, 17–18, 20, 33, 42, 52, 57–58, 79–80, 118
Tu people, 21, 83, 134
12 Mukam, 76, 85, 87
Two Innocents in Red China, 49, 51

U

UNESCO, 76–77, 91, 130, 134, 138
Uygur people, 19, 26, 28, 33, 38–39, 56–58, 75–77, 79, 84–85, 87, 93, 110, 141–142

V

Va people, 20, 108
Vatican, 142–145

W

War against poverty, 112–115
War of Resistance, 52
Western Development, 106, 117–118, 120, 128
World Heritage List, 131, 134, 138

X

Xibe people, 21, 42
Xie Juezai, 53
Xinjiang, 14, 19–21, 26, 28, 38–39, 51, 56–59, 77, 85, 87, 93, 99, 105, 110, 112, 114, 121–122, 140–141

Y

Yao people, 15, 17, 20, 52, 60, 79–80, 113, 115, 148–149
Yi people, 17, 19–20, 33, 52, 74, 79, 80, 83–84, 88, 150
Yugur people, 21, 42, 52, 80, 108, 134
Yungang Grottoes, 130

Z

Zhou Enlai, 83–84
Zhuang people, 20, 27, 31–33, 38, 42, 52, 57, 60–61, 74, 79–80, 83–84, 95, 109, 113, 117
Zhu De, 53